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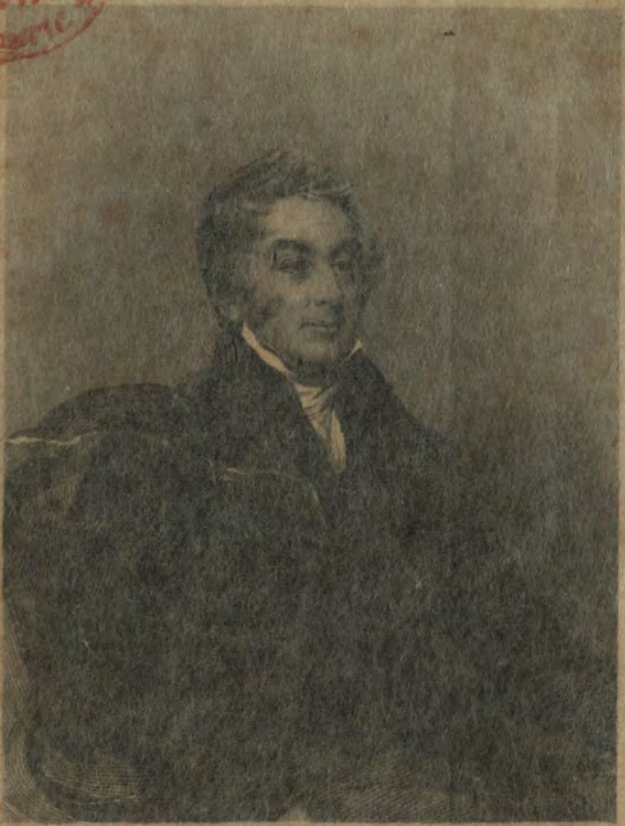

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MILMAN'S

POETICAL WORKS.

VOL. I.

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THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF THE

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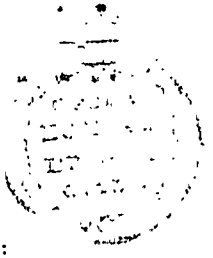
1665.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO HER

WHO HAS MADE THE POETRY OF LIFE REALITY,

THESE POEMS

ARE INSCRIBED,

BY

HER AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS edition contains all the poetical works of the Author. They are not printed in the order of publication, as it was thought best to arrange the three Dramas on religious subjects in one volume by themselves. The first publication of the Author, except the Prize Poems and one other published at Oxford, was "Fazio;" this was followed by "Samor;" after this appeared successively "The Fall of Jerusalem," "The Martyr of Antioch," "Belshazzar," "Anne Boleyn," and, lastly, "Nala" and the Translations of Indian Poetry. Prefatory remarks have been affixed, and some notes subjoined to each poem.

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THE

FALL OF JERUSALEM.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

EVERY reader will at once perceive from the nature of the interest, and from the language, that this drama was neither written with a view to public representation, nor can be adapted to it without being entirely remodelled and re-written. The critic will draw the same conclusion from certain peculiarities in the composition, irreconcilable with the arrangements of the theatre; the introducing and dismissing of the subordinate characters after a single appearance, and yet appropriating to them some of the most poetical speeches.

The ground-work of the poem is to be found in Josephus, but the events of a considerable time are compressed into a period of about thirty-six hours. Though their children are fictitious characters, the leaders of the Jews, Simon, John, and Eleazar are historical. At the beginning of the siege the defenders of the city were divided into three factions. John, however, having surprised Eleazar, who occupied the Temple, during a festival, the party of Eleazar became subordinate to that of John. The character of John the Galilean was that of excessive sensuality, I have therefore considered him as belonging to the sect of the Sadducees; Simon, on the other hand, I have represented as a native of Jerusalem, and a strict Pharisee, although his soldiers were chiefly Edomites. The Christians, we learn from Eusebius, abandoned the city previous to the siege (by divine command, according to that

author), and took refuge in Pella, a small town on the further side of the Jordan. The constant tradition of the Church has been, that no one professing that faith perished during all the havoc which attended on this most awful visitation.

It has been my object also to show the full completion of prophecy in this great event; nor do I conceive that the public mind (should this poem merit attention) can be directed to so striking and so incontestable an evidence of the Christian faith without advantage. Those whom duty might not induce to compare the long narrative of Josephus with the scriptural prediction of the "Abomination of Desolation," may be tempted by the embellishments of poetic language, and the interest of a dramatic fable.

CHARACTERS.

ROMANS.

TITUS.

CAIUS PLACIDUS.

TIBERIUS ALEXANDER.

TERENTIUS RUFUS.

DIAGORAS, *a Stoic Philosopher.*

JOSEPH (*the Historian*) *with the Roman army.*

Soldiers, &c.

JEWS IN THE CITY.

SIMON, *the Assassin.*

JOHN, *the Tyrant.*

ELEAZAR, *the Zealot.*

AMARIAH, *son of John.*

The HIGH-PRIEST.

BEN CATHLA, *leader of the Edomites.*

AARON, *a Levite.*

ABIRAM, *a false Prophet.*

Many Jews.

JAVAN, *a Christian, by birth a Jew.*

MIRIAM, SALOME, } *Daughters of Simon.*

THE

FALL OF JERUSALEM.

The Mount of Olives—Evening.

TITUS, CAIUS PLACIDUS*, TIBERIUS ALEXANDER, TERENTIUS RUFUS, DIAGORAS, &c.

TITUS.

ADVANCE the eagles, Caius Placidus,
Even to the walls of this rebellious city!
What! shall our bird of conquest, that hath flown
Over the world, and built her nest of glory
Even in the palace tops of proudest kings,
What! shall she check and pause here in her circle,
Her centre of dominion? By the gods,
It is a treason to all-conquering Rome,
That thus our baffled legions stand at bay
Before this hemm'd and famishing Jerusalem.

* Placidus, though not expressly mentioned as one of the Roman generals engaged, had a command previously in Syria.

PLACIDUS.

Son of Vespasian! I have been a soldier,
Till the helm hath worn mine aged temples bare.
Battles have been familiar to mine eyes
As is the sunlight, and the angry Mars
Wears not a terror to appal the souls
Of constant men, but I have fronted it.
I have seen the painted Briton sweep to battle
On his scythed car, and, when he fell, he fell
As one that honour'd death by nobly dying.
And I have been where flying Parthians shower'd
Their arrows, making the pursuer check
His fierce steed with the sudden grasp of death.
But war like this, so frantic and so desperate,
Man ne'er beheld. Our swords are blunt with slaying,
And yet, as though the earth cast up again
Souls discontented with a single death,
They grow beneath the slaughter. Neither battle,
Nor famine, nor the withering pestilence,
Subdues these prodigals of blood: by day
They cast their lives upon our swords; by night
They turn their civil weapons on themselves,
Even till insatiate War shrinks to behold
The hideous consummation.

TITUS.

It must be—
And yet it moves me, Romans! it confounds
The counsels of my firm philosophy,

That Ruin's merciless ploughshare must pass o'er,
And barren salt be sown on yon proud city.
As on our olive-crowned hill we stand,
Where Kedron at our feet its scanty waters
Distils from stone to stone with gentle motion,
As through a valley sacred to sweet peace,
How boldly doth it front us! how majestically!
Like a luxurious vineyard, the hill side
Is hung with marble fabrics, line o'er line,
Terrace o'er terrace, nearer still, and nearer
To the blue heavens. Here bright and sumptuous palaces,
With cool and verdant gardens interspers'd;
Here towers of war that frown in massy strength.
While over all hangs the rich purple eve,
As conscious of its being her last farewell
Of light and glory to that fated city.
And, as our clouds of battle dust and smoke
Are melted into air, behold the Temple,
In undisturbed and lone serenity
Finding itself a solemn sanctuary
In the profound of heaven! It stands before us
A mount of snow fretted with golden pinnacles*!
The very sun, as though he worshipp'd there,
Lingers upon the gilded cedar roofs;

* Τοῖς γε μὴν εἰσαφικνουμένοις ξένοις, πόρρωθεν ὄμοιος ὄρει χιόνος πλήρει κατεφαίνετο, καὶ γὰρ καθὰ μὴ κεχρύσωτο λευκότατος ἦν. (*Joseph.* lib. v. c. 5.) See the whole description.

And down the long and branching porticoes,
On every flowery-sculptured capital,
Glitters the homage of his parting beams.
By Hercules! the sight might almost win
The offended majesty of Rome to mercy.

TIBERIUS ALEXANDER*.

Wond'rous indeed it is, great Son of Cæsar,
But it shall be more wond'rous, when the triumph
Of Titus marches through those brazen gates,
Which seem as though they would invite the world
To worship in the precincts of her Temple,
As he in laurell'd pomp is borne along
To that new palace of his pride.

TITUS.

Tiberius!

It cannot be——

TIBERIUS.

What cannot be, which Rome
Commands, and Titus, the great heir of Rome?

TITUS.

I tell thee, Alexander, it must fall!
Yon lofty city, and yon gorgeous Temple,
Are consecrate to Ruin. Earth is weary

* Tiberius Alexander had been governor of Judea about twenty years before (from A.C. 46 to 48): he was an apostate Egyptian Jew, the son of Alexander, the Alabarch of Alexandria, and nephew of the celebrated Philo. The only act recorded of his short government was the crucifixion of James and Simon, two sons of Judas the Galilean, who had attempted to disseminate the dangerous doctrines of their father. (*Hist. of Jews*, ii. 202.)

Of the wild factions of this jealous people,
And they must feel our wrath, the wrath of Rome,
Even so that the rapt stranger shall admire
Where that proud city stood, which was Jerusalem.

DIAGORAS.

Thy brethren of the porch, imperial Titus,
Of late esteem'd thee at the height of those
Who with consummate wisdom have tamed down
The fierce and turbulent passions which distract
The vulgar soul*; they deem'd that, like Olympus,
Thou, on thy cold and lofty eminence,
Severely didst maintain thy sacred quiet
Above the clouds and tumult of low earth.
But now we see thee stooping to the thraldom
Of every fierce affection, now entranced
In deepest admiration, and anon
Wrath hath the absolute empire o'er thy soul.
Methinks we must unschool our royal pupil,
And cast him back to the common herd of men.

TITUS.

'Tis true, Diagoras; yet wherefore ask not,
For vainly have I question'd mine own reason:
But thus it is—I know not whence or how,
There is a stern command upon my soul.
I feel the inexorable fate within
That tells me, carnage is a duty here,

* Reginald Heber's "Stoic tyrant's philosophic pride" will occur to the memory at least of academic readers.

And that the appointed desolation chides
The tardy vengeance of our war. Diagoras,
If that I err, impeach my tenets. Destiny
Is over all, and hard Necessity
Holds o'er the shifting course of human things
Her paramount dominion. Like a flood
The irresistible stream of fate flows on,
And urges in its vast and sweeping motion
Kings, Consuls, Cæsars, with their mightiest armies,
Each to his fix'd, inevitable end.
Yea, even eternal Rome, and Father Jove,
Sternly submissive, sail that onward tide*.
And now am I upon its rushing bosom,
I feel its silent billows swell beneath me,
Bearing me and the conquering arms of Rome
'Gainst yon devoted city. On they pass,
And ages yet to come shall pause and wonder
At the utter wreck, which they shall leave behind them.
But, Placidus, I read thy look severe.
This is no time nor place for school debates
On the high points of wisdom. Let this night
Our wide encircling walls complete their circuit†;
And still the approaching trenches closer mine

* The following sentence of Seneca may show that the Stoic Predestination is not too strongly expressed. "Eadem necessitate et Deos alligat. Irrevocabilis humana pariter et divina cursus alligat. Ille ipse omnium conditor ac rector scripsit quidem fata sed sequitur. Semper paret, semel jussit." (*Seneca de Providentiâ*, c. 5.)

† The days shall come upon thee when thine enemies shall cast a trench

Their secret way; the engines and the towers
Stand each at their appointed post—Terentius,
That charge be thine.

TERENTIUS*.

There spoke again the Roman.
Faith! like old Mummius, I should give to the flame
Whate'er opposed the sovereign sway of Cæsar,
If it were wrought of massy molten gold:
And though I wear a beard, I boast not much
Of my philosophy. But this I know,
That to oppose the omnipotent arms of Rome
Is to pluck down and tempt a final doom.

The Fountain of Siloe†*—Night.*

JAVAN.

Sweet fountain, once again I visit thee!
And thou art flowing on, and freshening still

about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. Luke, xix. 43.

For the remarkable and perfect completion of this prophecy, see the description of the wall built by Titus. (*Josephus*, lib. v. c. 12.)

* "Terentius Rufus, or Ternus Rufus (as his name appears in the Rabbinical traditions, ever coupled with the most rancorous expressions of hatred, and confounded with the no less obnoxious T. Annius Rufus, the governor of Judea in the time of Hadrian) executed the work of desolation, of which he was left in charge, with unrelenting severity."—*Hist. of Jews*, Vol. iii. 68. This work was the total demolition of the city after its capture. Compare, on the curious coincidence of a general named T. Annius Rufus being employed on the same work of destruction by Hadrian.—*Hist. of Jews*, iii. p. 119.

† The fountain of Siloe was just without the walls. The upper city,

The green moss, and the flowers that bend to thee,
Modestly with a soft unboastful murmur
Rejoicing at the blessings that thou bearest.
Pure, stainless, thou art flowing on; the stars
Make thee their mirror, and the moonlight beams
Course one another o'er thy silver bosom:
And yet thy flowing is through fields of blood,
And armed men their hot and weary brows
Slake with thy limpid and perennial coolness.
Even with such rare and singular purity
Mov'st thou, oh Miriam, in yon cruel city.
Men's eyes, o'erwearied with the sights of war,
With tumult and with grief, repose on thee
As on a refuge and a sweet refreshment.
Thou canst o'erawe, thou in thy gentleness,
A trembling, pale and melancholy maid,
The brutal violence of ungodly men.
Thou glidest on amid the dark pollution
In modesty unstain'd, and heavenly influences,
More lovely than the light of star or moon,
As though delighted with their own reflection
From spirit so pure, dwell evermore upon thee.
Oh! how dost thou, beloved proselyte
To the high creed of Him who died for men,
Oh! how dost thou commend the truths I teach thee,

occupied by Simon, (*Joseph.* v. 6,) ended nearly on a line with the fountain. Though, indeed, Simon commanded parts also of the lower city.—*Joseph.* v 1.

Siloe's brook, that flowed
Close by the oracles of God. MILTON.

By the strong faith and soft humility
Wherewith thy soul embraces them! Thou prayest,
And I, who pray with thee, feel my words wing'd,
And holier fervor gushing from my heart,
While Heaven seems smiling kind acceptance down
On the associate of so pure a worshipper.
But ah! why com'st thou not? these two long nights
I've watch'd for thee in vain, and have not felt
The music of thy footsteps on my spirit——

VOICE AT A DISTANCE.

Javan!

JAVAN.

It is her voice! the air is fond of it,
And enviously delays its tender sounds
From the ear that thirsteth for them—Miriam!

JAVAN, MIRIAM.

JAVAN.

Nay, stand thus in thy timid breathlessness,
That I may gaze on thee, and thou not chide me
Because I gaze too fondly.

MIRIAM.

Hast thou brought me
Thy wonted offerings?

JAVAN.

Dearest, they are here:
The bursting fig, the cool and ripe pomegranate,
The skin all rosy with the emprisoned wine;

All I can bear thee, more than thou canst bear
Home to the city.

MIRIAM.

Bless thee!—Oh my father!
How will thy famish'd and thy toil-bow'd frame
Resume its native majesty! thy words,
When this bright draught hath slak'd thy parched lips,
Flow with their wonted freedom and command.

JAVAN.

Thy father! still no thought but of thy father!
Nay, Miriam! but thou must hear me now,
Now ere we part—if we must part again,
If my sad spirit must be rent from thine.
Even now our city trembles on the verge
Of utter ruin. Yet a night or two,
And the fierce stranger in our burning streets
Stands conqueror: and how the Roman conquers
Let Gamala, let fallen Jotapata *
Tell, if one living man, one innocent child,
Yet wander o'er their cold and scatter'd ashes.
They slew them, Miriam, the old grey man,
Whose blood scarce tinged their swords—(nay, turn not from me,
The tears thou sheddest feel as though I wrung them

* Gamala and Jotapata, towns before taken by the Romans. In the earlier editions it stood, Gischala. The conduct of the conqueror to Gischala, which surrendered, was marked with far greater lenity than to Jotapata and Gamala, which were given up to general massacre.—Compare *Joseph.* B. J., iii. 7. and iv. 1.—*Hist. of Jews*, ii. 305, 308, and 333.

From mine own heart, my life-blood's dearest drops)—
They slew them, Miriam, at the mother's breast,
The smiling infants ;—and the tender maid,
The soft, the loving, and the chaste, like thee,
They slew her not till——

MIRIAM.

Javan, 'tis unkind!
I have enough at home of thoughts like these,
Thoughts horrible, that freeze the blood, and make
A heavier burthen of this weary life.
I hoped with thee t' have pass'd a tranquil hour,
A brief, a hurried, yet still tranquil hour!
—But thou art like them all! the miserable
Have only Heaven, where they can rest in peace,
Without being mock'd and taunted with their misery.

JAVAN.

Thou know'st it is a lover's wayward joy
To be reproach'd by her he loves, or thus
Thou would'st not speak. But 'twas not to provoke
That sweet reproof, which sounds so like to tenderness ;
I would alarm thee, shock thee, but to save.
That old and secret stair, down which thou stealest
At midnight through tall grass and olive trunks,
Which cumber, yet conceal thy difficult path,
It cannot long remain secure and open ;
Nearer and closer the stern Roman winds
His trenches ; and on every side but this
Soars his emprisoning wall. Yet, yet 'tis time,

And I must bear thee with me, where are met,
In Pella, the neglected church of Christ.

MIRIAM.

With thee! to fly with thee! thou mak'st me fear
Lest all this while I have deceived my soul,
Excusing to myself our stolen meetings
By the fond thought, that for my father's life
I labour'd, bearing sustenance from thee,
Which he hath deem'd heaven-sent.

JAVAN.

Oh! farewell then
The faithless dream, the sweet yet faithless dream,
That Miriam loves me!

MIRIAM.

Love thee! I am here,
Here at dead midnight by the fountain's side,
Trusting thee, Javan, with a faith as fearless
As that with which the instinctive infant turns
To its mother's bosom—Love thee! when the sounds
Of massacre are round me, when the shouts
Of frantic men in battle rack the soul
With their importunate and jarring din,
Javan, I think on thee, and am at peace.
Our famish'd maidens gaze on me, and see
That I am famish'd like themselves, as pale,
With lips as parch'd and eyes as wild, yet I
Sit patient with an enviable smile
On my wan cheeks, for then my spirit feasts

Contented on its pleasing thoughts of thee.
My very prayers are full of thee, I look
To heaven and bless thee; for from thee I learnt
The way by which we reach the eternal mansions.
But thou, injurious Javan! coldly doubtest!
And—Oh! but I have said too much! Oh! scorn not
The immodest maid, whom thou hast vex'd to utter
What yet she scarce dared whisper to herself.

JAVAN.

Will it then cease? will it not always sound
Sweet, musical as thus? and wilt thou leave me?

MIRIAM.

My father!

JAVAN.

Miriam! is not thy father
(Oh, that such flowers should bloom on such a stock!)
The curse of Israel? even his common name
Simon the Assassin!—of the bloody men
That hold their iron sway within yon city,
The bloodiest?

MIRIAM.

Oh cease! I pray thee, cease!
Javan! I know that all men hate my father;
Javan! I fear that all should hate my father;
And therefore, Javan, must his daughter's love,
Her dutiful, her deep, her fervent love,
Make up to his forlorn and desolate heart
The forfeited affections of his kind.

Is 't not so written in our Law? and He
We worship came not to destroy the Law.
Then let men rain their curses, let the storm
Of human hate beat on his rugged trunk,
I will cling to him, starve, die, bear the scoffs
Of men upon my scatter'd bones with him.

JAVAN.

Oh, Miriam! what a fatal art hast thou
Of winding thought, word, act, to thy sole purpose;
The enamouring one even now too much enamour'd!
I must admire thee more for so denying,
Than I had dared if thou hadst fondly granted.
Thou dost devote thyself to utterest peril,
And me to deepest anguish; yet even now
Thou art lovelier to me in thy cold severity,
Flying me, leaving me without a joy,
Without a hope on earth, without thyself;
Thou art lovelier now than if thy yielding soul
Had smiled on me a passionate consent.
Go! for I see thy parting homeward look,
Go in thy beauty! like a setting star,
The last in all the thick and moonless heavens,
O'er the lone traveller in the trackless desert.
Go! if this dark and miserable earth
Do jealously refuse us place for meeting,
There is a heaven for those who trust in Christ.
Farewell!——

And thou return'st!—

MIRIAM.

I had forgot——

The fruit, the wine——Oh! when I part from thee
How can I think of aught but thy last words?

JAVAN.

Bless thee! but we may meet again even here!
Thou look'st consent, I see it through thy tears.
Yet once again that cold sad word, Farewell!

The House of Simon.

MIRIAM.

Oh God! thou surely dost approve mine act,
For thou didst bid thy soft and silver moon
To light me back upon my intricate way.
Even o'er each shadowy thing at which I trembled
She pour'd a sober beauty, and my terror
Was mingled with a sense of calm delight.
How changed that way! when yet a laughing child,
It was my sport to thread that broken stair
That from our house leads down into the vale,
By which, in ancient days, the maidens stole
To bathe in the cool fountain's secret waters.
In each wild olive trunk, and twisted root
Of sycamore, with ivy overgrown,
I have nestled, and the flowers would seem to welcome me.
I loved it with a child's capricious love,
Because none knew it but myself. Its loneliness
I loved, for still my sole companions there,

The doves, sate murmuring in the noonday sun.
Ah! now there broods no bird of peace and love!
Even as I pass'd, a sullen vulture rose,
And heavily it flapped its huge wings o'er me,
As though o'ergorged with blood of Israel.

MIRIAM, SALONE *.

MIRIAM.

Sister, not yet at rest?

SALONE.

At rest! at rest!
The wretched and the desperate, let them court
The dull, the dreamless, the unconscious sleep,
To lap them in its stagnant lethargy.
But oh! the bright, the rapturous disturbances
That break my haunted slumbers! Fast they come,
They crowd around my couch, and all my chamber
Is radiant with them. There I lie and bask
In their glad promise, till the oppressed spirit
Can bear no more, and I come forth to breathe
The cool free air.

MIRIAM.

Dear sister, in our state,
So dark, so hopeless, dreaming still of glory†!

* Perhaps I ought to state, in justice to myself, that this Poem was published before the Pirate of Sir W. Scott, whose beautiful Minna and Brenda I might be suspected of having attempted to imitate in the contrast of these Jewish sisters.

† The reader of Josephus will scarcely think these visions of glory beyond

SALONE.

Low-minded Miriam! I tell thee, oft
I have told thee, nightly do the visitations
Break on my gifted sight, more golden bright
Than the rich morn on Carmel. Of their shape,
Sister, I know not; this I only know,
That they pour o'er me like the restless waters
Of some pure cataract in the noontide sun.
There is a mingling of all glorious forms,
Of Angels riding upon cloudy thrones,
And our proud city marching all abroad
Like a crown'd conqueror o'er the trampled Gentiles.

MIRIAM.

Alas! when God afflicts us in his wrath,
'Tis sin to mock with wild untimely gladness
His stern inflictions! Else, beloved Salone,
My soul would envy thee thy mad forgetfulness,
And dote on the distraction of thy dreams,
Till it imbibed the infection of their joy.

SALONE.

What mean'st thou?

MIRIAM.

Ah! thou know'st too well, Salone.
How with an audible and imperious voice
The Lord is speaking in the streets of Judah,

---

the legitimate bounds of poetic embellishment. False prophets are said by the historian to have been paid by the leaders of the insurrection to keep up the courage of the populace.—*Joseph.* B. J., vi, 5. 2.

" Down to the dust, proud daughters of Jerusalem!
" The crownings of your head be bitter ashes,
" Your festal garments changed to mourning sackcloth,
" Your bridal songs fail into burial wailings."

SALONE.

Our bridal songs*! Away! I know them now,
They were the rich and bursting cadences
That thrall'd mine ears. I tell thee, doubting woman!
My spirit drank the sounds of all the city.
And there were shriekings for the dead, and sobs
Of dying men, and the quick peevish moan
Of the half famished: there were trumpet sounds
Of arming to the battle, and the shouts
Of onset, and the fall of flaming houses
Crashing around. But in the house of Simon,
The silver lute spake to the dulcimer;
The tabret and the harp held sweet discourse;
And all along our roofs, and all about
The silence of our chambers, flow'd the sweetness.
Even yet I hear them—Hark! yet, yet they sound.

MIRIAM.

Alas! we listen to our own fond hopes,
Even till they seem no more our fancy's children.
We put them on a prophet's robes, endow them
With prophets' voices, and then Heaven speaks in them,
And that which we would have be, surely shall be.

* It must be recollected, that the unmarried state was looked on with peculiar horror by the Jewish maidens. By marriage there was a hope of becoming the mother of the Messiah.

SALONE.

What, mock'st thou still? still enviously doubtest
The mark'd and favour'd of the Everlasting?

MIRIAM.

Oh gracious Lord! thou know'st she hath not eaten
For two long days, and now her troubled brain
Is full of strangeness.

SALONE.

Ha! still unbelieving!
Then, then 'tis true, what I have doubted long.
False traitress to our city, to the race,
The chosen race of Abraham! loose apostate
From Israel's faith! Believer in the Crucified!
I know thee, I abjure thee. Thou'rt no child
Of Simon's house, no sister of Salone:
I blot thee from my heart, I wipe away
All memory of our youthful pleasant hours,
Our blended sports and tasks, and joys and sorrows;
Yea, I'll proclaim thee.

MIRIAM.

Sister! dearest sister!
Thou seest that I cannot speak for tears.

SALONE.

Away! thou wilt not speak, thou dar'st not—Hark!
My father's armed footstep! at whose tread
Sion rejoices, and the pavement stones
Of Salem shout with proud and boastful echoes;
The Gentiles' scourge, the Christians'—tremble, false one!

MIRIAM, SALONE, SIMON.

SALONE.

Father!

MIRIAM.

Dear father!

SIMON.

Daughters, I have been
With Eleazar, and with John of Galilee,
The son of Sadoc. We have search'd the city,
If any rebel to our ordinance
Do traitorously withhold his private hoard
Of stolen provision from the public store.

SALONE.

And found ye any guilty of a fraud
So base on Judah's warriors?

SIMON.

Yes, my children!
There sate a woman in a lowly house,
And she had moulded meal into a cake;
And she sate weeping even in wild delight
Over her sleeping infants, at the thought
Of how their eyes would glisten to behold
The unaccustom'd food. She had not tasted
Herself the strange repast: but she had raised
The covering under which the children lay
Crouching and clinging fondly to each other,
As though the warmth that breath'd from out their bodies
Had some refreshment for their wither'd lips.

We bared our swords to slay: but subtle John
Snatch'd the food from her, trod it on the ground,
And mock'd her.

MIRIAM.

But *thou* didst not smite her, father?

SIMON.

No! we were wiser than to bless with death
A wretch like her.

But I must seek within,
If he, that oft at dead of midnight placeth
The wine and fruit within our chosen house,
Hath minister'd this night to Israel's chief.

MIRIAM, SALONE.

SALONE.

Oh, Miriam! I dare not tell him now!
For even as those two infants lay together,
Nestling their sleeping faces on each other;
Even so have we two lain, and I have felt
Thy breath upon my face, and every motion
Of thy soft bosom answering to mine own.

SIMON, SALONE, MIRIAM.

SIMON.

Come, daughters, I have wash'd my bloody hands,
And said my prayers, and we will eat—And thee
First will I bless, thou secret messenger,
That mine ambrosial banquet doth prepare

With gracious stealth: where'er thou art, if yet
Thy unseen presence lingers in our air,
Or walks our earth in beauty, hear me bless thee.

MIRIAM (*apart*).

He blesseth me! me, though he means it not!
I thought t' have heard his stern heart-withering curse,
And God hath changed it to a gentle blessing.

SIMON.

Why stands my loving Miriam aloof?
Will she not join to thank the God of Israel,
Who thus with signal mercy seals her father
His chosen captain.

MIRIAM (*apart*).

Yet must I endure—
For if he knew it came from Christian hands,
While the ripe fruit was bursting at his lips,
While the cool wine-cup slak'd his burning throat,
He'd dash it to the earth, and trample on it;
And then he'd perish, perish in his sins——
Father, I come—but I have vow'd to sing
A hymn this night,—I'll follow thee anon.

SIMON.

Come then, Salone; while we feast, I'll tell thee
More deeds of justice which mine arm hath wrought
Against the foes of Salem, and the renegades
That have revolted from the arms of Israel:
And thou shalt wave thy raven locks with pride
To hear the stern-told glories of thy father.

MIRIAM (*alone*).

Oh Thou! thou who canst melt the heart of stone,
And make the desert of the cruel breast
A paradise of soft and gentle thoughts!
Ah! will it ever be, that thou wilt visit
The darkness of my father's soul? Thou knowest
In what strong bondage Zeal and ancient Faith,
Passion and stubborn Custom, and fierce Pride,
Hold th' heart of man. Thou knowest, Merciful!
That knowest all things, and dost ever turn
Thine eye of pity on our guilty nature.

For thou wert born of woman! thou didst come,
Oh Holiest! to this world of sin and gloom,
Not in thy dread omnipotent array;
And not by thunders strew'd
Was thy tempestuous road;
Nor indignation burnt before thee on thy way.
But thee, a soft and naked child,
Thy mother undefiled,
In the rude manger laid to rest
From off her virgin breast.

The heavens were not commanded to prepare
A gorgeous canopy of golden air;
Nor stoop'd their lamps th' enthroned fires on high:
A single silent star
Came wandering from afar,
Gliding uncheck'd and calm along the liquid sky;

The Eastern Sages leading on
As at a kingly throne,
To lay their gold and odours sweet
Before thy infant feet.

The Earth and Ocean were not hush'd to hear
Bright harmony from every starry sphere;
Nor at thy presence brake the voice of song
From all the cherub choirs,
And seraphs' burning lyres,
Pour'd thro' the host of heaven the charmed clouds along.
One angel troop the strain began,
Of all the race of man
By simple shepherds heard alone,
That soft Hosanna's tone.

And when thou didst depart, no car of flame
To bear thee hence in lambent radiance came;
Nor visible Angels mourn'd with drooping plumes:
Nor didst thou mount on high
From fatal Calvary
With all thine own redeem'd outbursting from their tombs.
For thou didst bear away from earth
But one of human birth,
The dying felon by thy side, to be
In Paradise with thee.

Nor o'er thy cross the clouds of vengeance brake;
A little while the conscious earth did shake

At that foul deed by her fierce children done;
A few dim hours of day
The world in darkness lay;
Then bask'd in bright repose beneath the cloudless sun·
While thou didst sleep beneath the tomb,
Consenting to thy doom;
Ere yet the white-robed Angel shone
Upon the sealed stone.

And when thou didst arise, thou didst not stand
With Devastation in thy red right hand,
Plaguing the guilty city's murtherous crew;
But thou didst haste to meet
Thy mother's coming feet,
And bear the words of peace unto the faithful few.
Then calmly, slowly did'st thou rise
Into thy native skies,
Thy human form dissolved on high
In its own radiancy.

The House of Simon—Break of Day.

SIMON.

The air is still and cool. It comes not yet:
I thought that I had felt it in my sleep
Weighing upon my choked and labouring breast,
That did rejoice beneath the stern oppression;
I thought I saw its lurid gloom o'erspreading

The starless waning night. But yet it comes not,
The broad and sultry thundercloud, wherein
The God of Israel evermore pavilions
The chariot of his vengeance. I look out,
And still, as I have seen, morn after morn,
The hills of Judah flash upon my sight
The accursed radiance of the Gentile arms.
But oh! ye sky-descending ministers,
That on invisible and soundless wing
Stoop to your earthly purposes, as swift
As rushing fire, and terrible as the wind
That sweeps the tentless desert—ye that move
Shrouded in secrecy as in a robe,
With gloom of deepest midnight the vaunt-courier
Of your dread presence! will ye not reveal?—
Will ye not one compassionate glimpse vouchsafe,
By what dark instruments 'tis now your charge
To save the Holy City?——Lord of Israel!
Thee too I ask, with bold yet holy awe,
Which now of thy obsequious elements
Choosest thou for thy champion and thy combatant?
For well they know, the wide and deluging Waters,
The ravenous Fire, and the plague-breathing Air,
Yea, and the yawning and wide-chasmed Earth,
They know thy bidding, by fix'd habit bound
To the usage of obedience. Or the rather,
Look we in weary yet undaunted hope
For Him that is to come, the Mighty Arm,

The Wearer of the purple robe of vengeance,
The Crowned with dominion? Let him haste;
The wine-press waits the trampling of his wrath,
And Judah yearns t' unfurl the Lion banner
Before the terrible radiance of his coming.

SIMON, JOHN, ELEAZAR, THE HIGH-PRIEST, AMARIAH, &c., &c.

JOHN.

How, Simon! have we broken on thy privacy!
Thou wert discoursing with the spirits of air.
Now, Eleazar, were not holy Simon
The just, the merciful, the righteous Simon,
A vessel meet for the prophetic trance?
Methinks 'tis on him now!

SIMON.

Ha! John of Galilee,
Still in the taunting vein? Reserv'st thou not
The bitter overflowings of thy lips
For yon fierce Gentiles?—But I will endure.

JOHN.

And then perchance 'twill please the saintly Simon,
When he hath mumbled o'er his two-hour prayers,
That we do ope our gates, and sally forth
To combat the uncircumcised——

SIMON.

Thy scoffs
Fall on me as the thin and scattering rain

Upon our Temple. If thou art here to urge
That, with confederate valiant resolution,
We burst upon the enemies of Jerusalem;
The thunder followeth not the lightning's flash
More swiftly than my warlike execution
Shall follow the fierce trumpet of thy wrath!

JOHN.

But hast thou ponder'd well, if still there be not
Some holy fast, new moon, or rigid sabbath,
Which may excuse a tame and coward peace
For one day longer to your men of Edom?

HIGH-PRIEST.

Oh! 'tis unwise, ye sworded delegates
Of Him who watcheth o'er Jerusalem,
Thus day by day in angry quarrel meeting
To glare upon each other, and to waste
In civil strife the blood that might preserve us.
The Roman conquers, but by Jewish arms.
The torrent, that in one broad channel rolling
Bears down the labour'd obstacles of man,
The o'erstriding bridge, the fix'd and ponderous dam,
Being sever'd, in its lazy separate course
Suffers control, and stagnates to its end.
And so ye fall, because ye do disdain
To stand together—like the pines of Lebanon,
That when in one vast wood they crown the hill,
From their proud heads shake off the uninjuring tempest;
But when their single trunks stand bare and naked

Before the rushing whirlwind, one by one
It hurls the uprooted trunks into the vale.

ELEAZAR (*apart*).

Curse on his words of peace! fall John, fall Simon,
There falls an enemy of Eleazar.

SIMON.

Now, John of Galilee, the High-Priest speaks wisely.

JOHN.

Why, ay, it is the privilege of their office,
The solemn grave distinction of their ephod.
Even such a discourse as this, so calm, so sage,
Did old Mathias hold*; and therefore Simon,
Unwilling that the vantage of his wisdom
Should rob our valour of its boasted fame,
Did slay him with his sons upon our wall!

SIMON.

Peace, son of Belial! or I'll scourge thee back
To the harlot chambers of thy loose adulteries.
I slew my foe, and where's the armed man
That will behold his enemy at his feet,
And spare to set his foot upon his neck?
The sword was given, and shall the sword not slay?—

HIGH-PRIEST.

Break off! break off! I hear the Gentile horn
Winding along the wide entrenched line.
Hear ye it not? hill answers hill, the valleys

* Simon put to death Mathias the High Priest and his sons, by whom he had been admitted into the city.

In their deep channels lengthen out the sound.
It rushes down Jehoshaphat, the depths
Of Hinnom answer. Hark! again they blow,
Chiding you, men of Judah, and insulting
Your bare and vacant walls, that now oppose not
Their firm array of javelin-hurling men,
Slingers, and pourers of the liquid fire.

AMARIAH.

Blow! blow! and rend the heavens, thou deep-voiced horn!
I hear thee, and rejoice at thee. Thou summoner
To the storm of battle, thou that dost invite
With stern and welcome importunity
The warrior soul to that high festival,
Where Valour with his armed hand administers
The cup of death!

JOHN.

Again, again it sounds!
It doth demand a parley with our chiefs.

AMARIAH.

Ay, father! and let Israel's chiefs reply
In the brave language of their javelin showers,
And shouts of furious onset.

JOHN.

Hold, hot boy!
That know'st not the deep luxury of scorn.
We 'll meet them, Simon, but to scoff at them;
We 'll dally with their hopes of base surrender,

Then mock them, till their haughty captain writhe
Beneath the keen and biting contumely.
Now, Eleazar, lead the way; brave Simon,
I follow thee—Come, men of Israel, come.

The Walls of the City.

Below—TITUS, *the Roman Army*, JOSEPH *of Jotapata, &c.*
Above—SIMON, JOHN, ELEAZAR, AMARIAH, *Jews.*

TITUS.

Men of Jerusalem! whose hardy zeal
And valiant patience in a cause less desperate
Might force the foe to reverence and admire;
To you thus speaks again the Queen of Earth,
All-conquering Rome!—whose kingdom is, where'er
The sunshine beams on living men; beneath
The shadow of whose throne the world reposes,
And glories in being subjected to her,
Even as 'tis subject to the immortal gods—
To you, whose mad and mutinous revolt
Hath harrow'd all your rich and pleasant land
With fiery rapine; sunk your lofty cities
To desolate heaps of monumental ashes;
Yet with that patience, which becomes the mighty,
The endurance of the lion, that disdains
The foe whose conquest bears no glory with it,
Rome doth command you to lay down your arms,
And bow the high front of your proud rebellion,

Even to the common level of obedience
That holds the rest of humankind. So doing,
Ye cancel all the dark and guilty past:
Silent Oblivion waits to wipe away
The record of your madness and your crimes;
And in the stead of bloody Vengeance claiming
Her penal due of torture, chains and death,
Comes reconciling Mercy.

JOHN.

Mercy! Roman!
With what a humble and a modest truth
Thou dost commend thy unpresuming virtues.
Ye want not testimonies to your mildness—
There, on yon lofty crosses, which surround us,
Each with a Jewish corpse sublimely rotting
On its most honourable eminence;
There's none in all that long and ghastly avenue
Whose wind-bleach'd bones depose not of thy mercy.
We know our brethren, and we thank thee too;
A courteous welcome hast thou given them, Roman,
Who have abandon'd us in the hour of peril.
They fled to 'scape their ruthless countrymen;
And, in good truth, their City of Refuge seems
To have found them fair and gentle entertainment*.

* Titus crucified round the city those who fled from the famine and the cruelty of the leaders within.—*Joseph.* v. c. 13. Sometimes, according to *Josephus*, (lib. v. c. 11.) 500 suffered in one day.

SIMON.

Peace, John of Galilee! and I will answer
This purple-mantled Captain of the Gentiles;
But in far other tone than he is wont
To hear about his silken couch of feasting
Amid his pamper'd parasites—I speak to thee,
Titus, as warrior should accost a warrior.
The world, thou boastest, is Rome's slave; the sun
Rises and sets upon no realm but yours;
Ye plant your giant foot in either ocean,
And vaunt that all which ye o'erstride is Rome's.
But think ye then, because the common earth
Surfeits your pride with homage, that our land,
Our separate, peculiar, sacred land,
Portion'd and seal'd unto us by the God
Who made the round world and the crystal heavens
A wond'rous land, where Nature's common course
Is strange and out of use, so oft the Lord
Invades it with miraculous intervention;
Think ye this land shall be a Heathen heritage,
An high place for your Moloch? Haughty Gentile,
Even now ye walk on ruin and on prodigy.
The air ye breathe is heavy and o'ercharged
With your dark gathering doom; and if our earth
Do yet in its disdain endure the footing
Of your arm'd legions, 'tis because it labours
With silent throes of expectation, waiting
The signal of your scattering. Lo! the mountains

Bend o'er you with their huge and lowering shadows,
Ready to rush and overwhelm: the winds
Do listen panting for the tardy presence
Of Him that shall avenge. And there is scorn,
Yea, there is laughter, in our fathers' tombs,
To think that Heathen conqueror doth aspire
To lord it over God's Jerusalem!
Yea, in Hell's deep and desolate abode,
Where dwell the perish'd kings, the chief of earth;
They whose idolatrous warfare erst assail'd
The Holy City, and the chosen people;
They wait for thee, the associate of their hopes
And fatal fall, to join their ruin'd conclave.
He whom the Red Sea 'whelm'd with all his host,
Pharaoh, the Egyptian; and the kings of Canaan;
The Philistine, the Dagon worshipper;
Moab, and Edom, and fierce Amalek;
And he of Babylon, whose multitudes,
Even on the hills where gleam your myriad spears*,
In one brief night the invisible Angel swept
With the dark, noiseless shadow of his wing,
And morn beheld the fierce and riotous camp
One cold, and mute, and tombless cemetery,
Sennacherib: all, all are risen, are moved;
Yea, they take up the taunting song of welcome
To him who, like themselves, hath madly warr'd

* The camp of Titus comprehended the space called the "Assyrian's Camp."

'Gainst Zion's walls, and miserably fallen
Before the avenging God of Israel!

THE JEWS.

Oh, holy Simon! Oh, prophetic Simon!
Lead thou, lead thou against the Gentile host,
And we will ask no Angel breath to blast them.
The valour of her children soon shall scatter
The spoiler from the rescued walls of Salem,
Even till the wolves of Palestine are glutted
With Roman carnage.

AMARIAH.

Blow, ye sacred priests,
Your trumpets, as when Jericho of old
Cast down its prostrate walls at Joshua's feet!

PLACIDUS.

Let the Jew speak, the captive of Jotapata;
Haply they'll reverence one, and him the bravest
Of their own kindred.

TERENTIUS.

See! he speaks to them;
And they do listen, though their menacing brows
Lower with a darker and more furious hate.

JOSEPH.

Yet, yet a little while—ye see me rise,
Oh, men of Israel, brethren, countrymen!
Even from the earth ye see me rise, where lone,
And sorrowful, and fasting, I have sate

* Compare *Josephus*, B. J. v. 9, 3.

These three long days; sad sackcloth on the limbs
Which once were wont to wear a soldier's raiment,
And ashes on the head, which ye of old
Did honour, when its helmed glories shone
Before you in the paths of battle. Hear me,
Ye that, as I, adore the Law, the Prophets;
And at the Ineffable thrice-Holiest name
Bow down your awe-struck foreheads to the ground.
I am not here to tell you, men of Israel,
That it is madness to contend with Rome;
That it were wisdom to submit and follow
The common fortunes of the universe;
For ye would answer, that 'tis glorious madness
To stand alone amid the enslaved world
Freedom's last desperate champions: ye would answer,
That the slave's wisdom to the free-born man
Is basest folly. Oh, my countrymen!
Before no earthly king do I command you
To fall subservient, not all-conquering Cæsar,
But in a mightier name I summon you,
The King of Kings! He, he is manifest
In the dark visitation that is on you.
'Tis He, whose loosed and raging ministers,
Wild War, gaunt Famine, leprous Pestilence,
But execute his delegated wrath.
Yea, by the fulness of your crimes, 'tis He!
Alas! shall I weep o'er thee, or go down
And grovel in the dust, and hide myself

From mine own shame? Oh, thou defiled Jerusalem!
That drinkest thine own blood as from a fountain;
That hast piled up the fabric of thy guilt
To such portentous height, that earth is darken'd
With its huge shadow—that dost boast the monuments
Of murder'd prophets, and dost make the robes
Of God's High-priest a title and a claim
To bloodiest slaughter—thou that every day
Dost trample down the thunder-given Law,
Even with the pride and joy of him that treads
The purple vintage—And oh thou, our Temple!
That wert of old the Beauty of Holiness,
The chosen, unapproachable abode
Of Him which dwelt between the cherubim,
Thou art a charnel-house, and sepulchre
Of slaughter'd men, a common butchery
Of civil strife;—and hence proclaim I, brethren,
It is the Lord who doth avenge his own:
The Lord, who gives you over to the wicked,
That ye may perish by their wickedness.
Oh! ye that do disdain to be Rome's slaves,
And yet are sold unto a baser bondage,
One that, like iron, eats into your souls.
Robbers, and Zealots, and wild Edomites!
Yea, these are they that sit in Moses' seat,
Wield Joshua's sword, and fill the throne of David;
Yea, these are they——

AMARIAH.

I'll hear no more—the foe
Claims from our lips the privilege of reply.
Here is our answer to the renegade,
A javelin to his pale and coward heart* !

JOSEPH.

I am struck, but not to death ! that yet is wanting
To Israel's guilt.

JEWS.

Oh, noble Amariah !
Well hast thou spoken ; well hast thou replied !
Lead—lead—we'll follow noble Amariah !

TITUS.

Now, Mercy, to the winds ! I cast thee off—
My soul's forbidden luxury, I abjure thee !
Thou much-abused attribute of gods
And godlike men. 'Twas nature's final struggle ;
And now, whate'er thou art, thou unseen prompter !
That in the secret chambers of my soul
Darkly abidest, and hast still rebuked
The soft compunctious weakness of mine heart,
I here surrender thee myself. Now wield me
Thine instrument of havoc and of horror,
Thine to the extremest limits of revenge ;
Till not a single stone of yon proud city
Remain ; and even the vestiges of ruin
Be utterly blotted from the face of earth !

* Josephus gives more than one speech which he addressed to his countrymen. They only mocked and once wounded him.

Streets of Jerusalem near the Inner Wall.

MIRIAM, SALONE.

MIRIAM.

Sweet sistor, whither in such haste?

SALONE.

And know'st thou not
My customary seat, where I look down
And see the glorious battle deepen round me?
Oh! it is spirit-stirring to behold
The crimson garments waving in the dust,
The eagles glancing in the clouded sunshine.

MIRIAM.

Salone! in this dark and solemn hour,
Were it not wiser that the weak and helpless,
Bearing their portion in the common danger,
Should join their feeble efforts to defend—
Should be upon their knees in fervent prayer
Unto the Lord of Battles?

SALONE.

Yes; I know
That Zion's daughters are set forth to lead
Their suppliant procession to the gates
Of the Holy Temple. But Salone goes
Where she may see the God whom they adore
In the stern deeds of valiant men, who war
To save that Temple from the dust.
Behold!

I mount my throne, and here I sit the queen
Of the majestic tumult that beneath me
Is maddening into conflict. Lo! I bind
My dark locks, that they spread not o'er my sight.
Now flash the bright sun from your gleaming arms,
Shake it in broad sheets from your banner folds,
Mine eyes will still endure the blaze, and pierce
The thickest!

MIRIAM.

And thou hast no tears to blind thee?

SALONE.

Behold! behold! from Olivet they pour,
Thousands on thousands, in their martial order.
Kedron's dark valley, like Gennesareth,
When over it the cold moon shines through storms,
Topping its dark waves with uncertain light,
Is tossing with wild plumes and gleaming spears.
Solemnly the stern lictors move, and brandish
Their rod-bound axes; and the eagles seem,
With wings dispread, to watch their time for swooping!
The towers are moving on; and lo! the engines,
As though instinct with life, come heavily labouring
Upon their ponderous wheels; they nod destruction
Against our walls. Lo! lo, our gates fly open:
There Eleazar—there the mighty John—
Ben Cathla there, and Edom's crested sons.
Oh! what a blaze of glory gathers round them!
How proudly move they in invincible strength!

MIRIAM.

And thou canst speak thus with a steadfast voice,
When in one hour may death have laid in the dust
Those breathing, moving, valiant multitudes?

SALONE.

And thou! oh thou, that movest to the battle
Even like the mountain stag to the running river,
Pause, pause, that I may gaze my fill!—

MIRIAM.

Our father!

Salone! is't our father that thou seest?

SALONE.

Lo! lo! the war hath broken off to admire him!
The glory of his presence awes the conflict!
The son of Cæsar on his armed steed
Rises, impatient of the plumed helms
That from his sight conceal young Amariah.

MIRIAM.

Alas! what means she? Hear me yet a word!
I will return or e'er the wounded men
Require our soft and healing hands to soothe them.
Thou'lt not forget, Salone—if thou seest
Our father in the fearful hour of peril,
Lift up thy hands and pray.

SALONE.

To gaze on him—
It is like gazing on the morning sun,
When he comes scattering from his burning orb
The vapourish clouds!

MIRIAM.

She hears, she heeds me not.
And here's a sight and sound to me more welcome
Than the wild fray of men who slay and die—
Our maidens on their way to the Holy Temple.
I'll mingle with them, and I'll pray with them;
But through a name, by them unknown or scorn'd,
My prayers shall mount to heaven.
Behold them here!
Behold them, how unlike to what they were!
Oh! virgin daughters of Jerusalem!
Ye were a garden once of Hermon's lilies,
That bashfully upon their tremulous stems
Bow to the wooing breath of the sweet spring.
Graceful ye were! there needed not the tone
Of tabret, harp, or lute, to modulate
Your soft harmonious footsteps; your light tread
Fell like a natural music. Ah! how deeply
Hath the cold blight of misery prey'd upon you.
How heavily ye drag your weary footsteps,
Each like a mother mourning her one child.
Ah me! I feel it almost as a sin,
To be so much less sad, less miserable.

CHORUS.

King of Kings! and Lord of Lords!
Thus we move, our sad steps tuning
To our cymbals' feeblest chiming,
Where thy House its rest accords.

Chased and wounded birds are we,
Through the dark air fled to thee;
To the shadow of thy wings,
Lord of Lords! and King of Kings!

Behold, oh Lord! the Heathen tread*
The branches of thy fruitful vine,
That its luxurious tendrils spread
O'er all the hills of Palestine.
And now the wild boar comes to waste
Even us, the greenest boughs and last,
That, drinking of thy choicest dew,
On Zion's hill in beauty grew.

No! by the marvels of thine hand,
Thou still wilt save thy chosen land!
By all thine ancient mercies shown,
By all our fathers' foes o'erthrown;
By the Egyptian's car-borne host,
Scatter'd on the Red Sea coast;
By that wide and bloodless slaughter
Underneath the drowning water.

Like us in utter helplessness,
In their last and worst distress—
On the sand and sea-weed lying,
Israel pour'd her doleful sighing;

* See Psalm, lxxx, 7, &c.

While before the deep sea flow'd,
And behind fierce Egypt rode—
To their fathers' God they pray'd,
To the Lord of Hosts for aid.

On the margin of the flood
With lifted rod the Prophet stood;
And the summon'd east wind blew,
And aside it sternly threw
The gather'd waves, that took their stand,
Like crystal rocks, on either hand,
Or walls of sea-green marble piled
Round some irregular city wild.

Then the light of morning lay
On the wonder-paved way,
Where the treasures of the deep
In their caves of coral sleep.
The profound abysses, where
Was never sound from upper air,
Rang with Israel's chanted words,
King of Kings! and Lord of Lords!

Then with bow and banner glancing,
On exulting Egypt came,
With her chosen horsemen prancing,
And her cars on wheels of flame,
In a rich and boastful ring
All around her furious king.

But the Lord from out his cloud,
The Lord look'd down upon the proud ;
And the host drave heavily
Down the deep bosom of the sea.

With a quick and sudden swell
Prone the liquid ramparts fell ;
Over horse, and over car,
Over every man of war,
Over Pharaoh's crown of gold,
The loud thundering billows roll'd.
As the level waters spread
Down they sank, they sank like lead,
Down without a cry or groan.
And the morning sun, that shone
On myriads of bright-armed men,
Its meridian radiance then
Cast on a wide sea, heaving, as of yore,
Against a silent, solitary shore.

Then did Israel's maidens sing,
Then did Israel's timbrels ring,
To him, the King of Kings ! that in the sea,
The Lord of Lords ! had triumph'd gloriously.

And our timbrels' flashing chords,
King of Kings ! and Lord of Lords !
Shall they not attuned be
Once again to victory ?

Lo! a glorious triumph now;
Lo! against thy people come
A mightier Pharaoh! wilt not thou
Craze the chariot wheels of Rome?
Will not, like the Red Sea wave,
Thy stern anger overthrow?
And from worse than bondage save,
From sadder than Egyptian woe,
Those whose silver cymbals glance,
Those who lead the suppliant dance,
Thy race, the only race that sings
"Lord of Lords! and King of Kings!"

Streets of Jerusalem—Evening.

MIRIAM.

Ah me! ungentle Eve, how long thou lingerest!
Oh! when it was a grief to me to lose
Yon azure mountains, and the lovely vales
That from our city walls seem wandering on
Under the cedar-tufted precipices;
With what an envious and a hurrying swiftness
Didst thou descend, and pour thy mantling dews
And dew-like silence o'er the face of things;
Shrouding each spot I loved the most with suddenest
And deepest darkness; making mute the groves
Where the birds nestled under the still leaves!
But now, how slowly, heavily thou fallest!

Now, when thou mightest hush the angry din
Of battle, and conceal the murtherous foes
From mutual slaughter, and pour oil and wine
Into the aching hurts of wounded men!
But is it therefore only that I chide thee
With querulous impatience? will the night
Once more, the secret, counsel-keeping night,
Veil the dark path which leads to Siloe's fountain?
Which leads—why should I blush to add—to Javan?
Oh thou, my teacher! I forgot thee not
This morning in the Temple—I forgot not
The name thou taught'st me to adore,—nor thee——
But what have I to do with thoughts like these,
While all around the stunning battle roars
Like a gorged lion o'er his mangled prey?
Alas! alas! but the human appetite
For shedding blood,—that is insatiate!
—Time was, that if I heard the sound of arms,
My heart would shudder, and my limbs would fail.
When, to have seen a dying man had been
A dark event, that with its fearful memory
Had haunted many a sad and sleepless night.
But now—now——

SALONE, MIRIAM.

MIRIAM.

Sister! my Salone! Sister!
Why art thou flying with that frantic mien,

Thy veil cast back and streaming with thine hair?
Oh, harbinger of misery! I read
A sad disastrous story in thy face;
'Tis o'er, and God hath given the city of David
Unto the stranger.

SALONE.

Oh! not yet; our wall,
Our last, our strongest wall, is still unshaken,
Though the fierce engines with their brazen heads
Strike at it sternly and incessantly.

MIRIAM.

Then God preserve the lost! and oh, our father!

SALONE.

All is not lost! for Amariah stands
Amid the rushing sheets of molten fire,
Even like an Angel in the flaming centre
Of the sun's noontide orb——
Hark! hark!—who comes?

SIMON.

Back—back—I say, by——

MIRIAM.

'Tis my father's voice!
It sounds in wrath, perhaps in blasphemy;
Yet 'tis my living father's voice——He's here.

SIMON, MIRIAM, SALONE.

SIMON.

Now may your native towers rush o'er your heads
With horrible downfal, may the treacherous stones

Start underneath your footing, cast you down
For the iron wheels of vengeance to rush o'er you—
Flight! flight! still flight;—Oh, infidel renegades!

The above, JOHN, AMARIAH, HIGH-PRIEST, *&c.*

SIMON.

Now by the living God of Israel, John!
Your silken slaves, your golden sandal'd men,—
Your men! I should have said, your girls of Galilee!—
They will not soil their dainty hands with blood.
Their myrrh-dew'd locks are all too smoothly curl'd
To let the riotous and dishevelling airs
Of battle violate their crisped neatness.
Oh! their nice mincing steps are all unfit
To tread the red and slippery paths of war;
Yet they can trip it lightly when they turn
To fly——

JOHN.

Thou lying and injurious Pharisee!
For every man of thine that in the trenches
Hardly hath consented to lay down his life,
Twice ten of mine have leap'd from off the walls,
Grasping a Gentile by the shivering helm,
And proudly died upon his dying foe.
But tell thou me, thou only faithful Simon!
Where are the men of Edom, whom we saw
Stretching their amicable hands in parley,
And quietly mingling with the unharming foe?

SIMON.

Where are they? where the traitors meet, where all
The foes of Simon and Jerusalem,
In th' everlasting fire! I slew them, John,—
Thou saw'st my red hand glorious with their blood.

JOHN.

False traitors! in their very treachery false;
They would betray without their lord—In truth,
Treason, like empire, brooks not rivalry.

SIMON.

Now by the bones of Abraham our father,
I do accuse thee here, false John of Galilee!
Or, if the title please thee, John the Tyrant!
Here, in our arm'd, embattled Sanhedrin,
Thou art our fall's prime cause, and fatal origin!
From thee, as from a foul and poisonous fount,
Pour the black waters of calamity
O'er Judah's land! God hates thee, man of Belial!
And the destroying bolts that fall on thee
From the insulted heavens, blast all around thee
With spacious and unsparing desolation.
Hear me, ye men of Israel! do ye wonder
That all your baffled valour hath recoil'd
From the fierce Gentile onset? that your walls
Are prostrate, and your last hath scarce repell'd
But now the flush'd invader? 'Tis from this—
That the Holy City will not be defended
By womanish men and loose adulterers.

Hear me, I say, this son of Gischala,
This lustful tyrant, hath he not defiled
Your daughters, in the open face of day
Done deeds of shame, which midnight hath no darkness
So deep as to conceal? It is his pride
T' offend high heaven with crimes before unknown.
Hath he not mock'd the austere and solemn fasts,
And sabbaths of our Law, by revellings
And most heaven-tainting wantonness? Yea, more,
Hath he not made God's festivals a false
And fraudful pretext for his deeds of guilt;
Yea, on the day of the Unleavened Bread,
Even in the garb and with the speech of worship,
Went he not up into the very Temple*?
And there before the Veil, even in the presence
Of th' Holy of Holies, did he not break forth
With armed and infuriate violence?
Then did the pavement, which was never red
But with the guiltless blood of sacrifice,
Reek with the indelible and thrice-foulest stain
Of human carnage. Yea, with impious steel
He slew the brethren that were kneeling with him
At the same altar, uttering the same prayers.
(Speak, Eleazar, was't not so?—thou dar'st not
Affirm, nor canst deny thine own betrayal.)
And since that cursed hour of guilty triumph

* This was the mode in which John surprised Eleazar, who before was in possession of the Temple.

There hath he held the palace of his lusts*,
Turning God's Temple to a grove of Belial:
Even till men wonder that the pillars start not
From their fix'd sockets; that the offended roof
Fall not at once, and crush in his own shame
The blasphemous invader. Yea, not yet,
I have not fathom'd yet his depth of sin.
His common banquet is the Bread of Offering,
The vessels of the altar are the cups
From which he drains his riotous drunkenness.
The incense, that was wont to rise to heaven
Pure as an infant's breath, now foully stagnates
Within the pestilent haunts of his lasciviousness.
Can these things be, and yet our favour'd arms
Be clad with victory? Can the Lord of Israel
For us, the scanty remnant of his worshippers,
Neglect to vindicate his tainted shrine,
His sanctuary profaned, his outraged Laws?

JOHN.

Methinks, if Simon had but fought to-day
As valiantly as Simon speaks, the foe
Had never seen to-morrow's onset—

SIMON.

Brethren,
Yet I demand your audience——

* Γυναικιζόμενοι δὲ τὰς ὄψεις, ἐφύνων ταῖς δεξιαῖς, θρυπτόμενοι δὲ τοῖς βαδίσμασιν, ἐξαπίνης ἐγίνοντο πολεμισταί. *Joseph.* lib. iv. c. 9, 10. There is a long passage to the same effect.

JEWS.

Hear him! hear
The righteous Simon!

SIMON.

Men of Israel!
Why stand ye thus in wonder? where the root
Is hollow, can the tree be sound? Man's deeds
Are as man's doctrines; and who hopes for aught
But wantonness and foul iniquity
From that blaspheming and heretical sect,
The serpent spawn of Sadoc, that corrupt
The Law of Moses and disdain the Prophets?
That grossly do defraud the eternal soul
Of its immortal heritage, and doom it
To rot for ever with its kindred clay
In the grave's deep unbroken prison-house?
Yea, they dispeople with their infidel creed
Heaven of its holy Angels; laugh to scorn
That secret band of ministering Spirits;
Who therefore, in their indignation, stand
Aloof, and gaze upon our gathering ruin
With a contemptuous and pitiless scorn.
They that were wont to range around our towers
Their sunlight-wing'd battalia, and to war
Upon our part with adamantine arms.

JOHN.

Oh! impotent and miserable arguer!
Will he who values not the stake as boldly

Confront the peril as the man that feels
His all upon the hazard? Men of Galilee,
The cup of life hath sparkled to our lips,
And we have drain'd its tide of love and joy,
Till our veins almost burst with o'erwrought rapture.
And well we know, that generous cup, once dash'd,
Shall never mantle more to the cold lips
Of the earth-bound dead. And therefore do we fight
For life as for a mistress, that being lost,
Is lost for ever. To be what we are
Is all we hope or pray for: think ye, then,
That we shall tamely yield the contest up,
And calmly acquiesce in our extinction?
We know that there stands yawning at our feet
The gulf, where dark Annihilation dwells
With Solitude, her sister; and we fix
Our steadfast footing on the perilous verge,
And grapple to the last with the fierce foe
That seeks to plunge us down; and where's the strength
That can subdue despair?——For the other charge,
We look not, Simon, to the sky, nor pray
For sightless and impalpable messengers
To spare us the proud peril of the war.
Ourselves are our own Angels! we implore not
Or supernatural or spiritual aid;
We have our own good arms, that God hath given us,
And valiant hearts to wield those mighty arms.

SIMON.

Oh heavens! oh heavens, ye hear it, and endure it,
Outwearied by the all-frequent blasphemy
To an indignant patience! and the Just
Still, still must suffer the enforced alliance
Of men whose fellowship is death and ruin.

JOHN.

Why, thou acknowledged Prince of Murderers!
Captain Assassin! Lord and Chief of Massacre!
That pourest blood like water, yet dost deem
That thou canst wash the foul and scarlet stain
From thy polluted soul as easily
As from thy dainty ever-dabbling hands;
That wouldst appease with rite and ordinance,
And festival, and slavish ceremony,
And prayers that weary even the stones thou kneel'st on,
The God whose image hourly thou effacest
With mangling and remorseless steel! 'Tis well
That graves are silent, and that dead men's souls
Assert not the proud privilege thou wouldst give them;
For if they did, Heaven's vaults would ring so loudly
With imprecations 'gainst the righteous Simon,
That they would pluck by force a plague upon us,
To which the Roman, and the wasting famine,
Were soft and healing mercies.

SIMON.

Liar and slave!
There is no rich libation to the All-Just

So welcome as the blood of renegades
And traitors——

MIRIAM (*apart*).

Oh! I dare not listen longer!
The big drops stand upon his brow; his voice
Is faint and fails, and there's no food at home.
The night is dark—I'll go once more, or perish.

[*Departs unperceived.*

SIMON.

What, John of Galilee! because my voice
Is hoarse with speaking of thy crimes, dost scoff,
And wag thy head at me, and answer laughter?
Now, if thy veins run not pure gall, I'll broach
Their tide, and prove if all my creed be false;
If traitors' reeking blood smell not to heaven
Like a sweet sacrifice.

JOHN.

Why, ay! the victim
Is bound to th' horns of th' altar! Strike, I say,
He waits thee—Strike!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Hold, Chiefs of Israel!
Just Simon! valiant John! once more I dare
To cast myself between you, the High-Priest,
Who by his holy office calls on you
To throw aside your trivial private wrongs,
And vindicate offence more rank and monstrous.
Avenge your God! and then avenge yourselves!

The Temple is polluted—Israel's Lord
Mock'd in his presence. Prayers from thence have risen,
Prayers from the jealous holy Sanctuary,
Even to the Crucified Man our fathers slew.

JEWS.

The Crucified! the Man of Nazareth!

HIGH-PRIEST.

This morn, as wont, our maidens had gone up
To chant their suppliant hymn; and they had raised
The song that Israel on the Red Sea shore
Took up triumphant; and they closed the strain,
That, like th' Egyptian and his car-borne host,
The billows of Heaven's wrath might overwhelm
The Gentile foe, and so preserve Jerusalem;
When at the close and fall a single voice
Linger'd upon the note, with, "Be it done
Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son."
My spirit shrank within me; horror-struck,
I listen'd; all was silence! Then again
I look'd upon the veiled damsels, all
With one accord took up the swelling strain
To him that triumph'd gloriously. I turn'd
To the Ark and Mercy Seat, and then again
I heard that single, soft, melodious voice,
"Lord of Mercies, be it done
Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son."
Here, then, assembled Lords of Israel,
Whoever be the victim, I demand her;

Your wisdom must detect, your justice wreak
Fit punishment upon the accursed sacrilege.

SALONE (*apart*).

Miriam! Miriam! Ha!—She's fled.—Guilt! Guilt
Prophetic of the damning accusation
It doth deserve! Apostate! 'twere a sin
Against Jerusalem and Heaven to spare thee!

HIGH-PRIEST.

I do commend you, brethren, for your silence!
I see the abhorrence labouring in your hearts,
Too deep and too infuriate for words.

SIMON.

Now, if it were my child, my Sarah's child,
The child that she died blessing, I'd not sleep
Till the stones crush her. Yea, thus, thus I'd grasp,
And hurl destruction on her guilty head.
Here, John, I pledge mine hand to thee, till vengeance
Seize on the false and insolent blasphemer.

SALONE.

(*Half unveiled, rushing forward, stops irresolutely.*)
Their eyes oppress me—my heart chokes my voice—
And my lips cling together—Oh! my mother,
Upon thy death-bed didst thou not beseech us
To love each other!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Veiled maid, what art thou?

SALONE.

Off! off! the blood of Abraham swells within me—

As I cast down my veil, I cast away
All fear, all tenderness, all fond remorse.
It is too good a death for one so guilty
To perish for Jerusalem—

[*She stands unveiled.*

SIMON.

Salone!

HIGH-PRIEST.

The admired daughter of the noble Simon!

VOICE AT A DISTANCE.

Israel! Israel!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Who is this, that speaks
With such a shrilling accent of command?

VOICE.

Israel! Israel!

JEWS.

Back! give place! the Prophet!

ABIRAM (*the false prophet*).

Israel! Israel!

HIGH-PRIEST.

Peace!

ABIRAM.

Ay! peace, I say!
The wounds are bound! the blood is staunch'd! and hate
Is turn'd to love! and rancorous jealousy
To kindred concord! and the clashing swords
To bridal sounds! the fury of the feud
To revel and the jocund nuptial feast.

HIGH-PRIEST.

What means Abiram?

ABIRAM.

It is from on high.
Brave Amariah, son of John! Salone,
Daughter of Simon! thus I join their hands;
And thus I bless the wedded and the beautiful!
And thus I bind the Captains of Jerusalem
In the strong bonds of unity and peace.—

And where is now the wine for the bridegroom's rosy cup*?
And the tabret and the harp for the chamber of the bride?
Lo! bright as burnish'd gold the lamps are sparkling up,
And the odours of the incense are breathing far and wide;
And the maidens' feet are glancing in the virgins' wedding train;
And the sad streets of Salem are alive with joy again?

THE JEWS.

Long live Salone! Long live Amariah!

SALONE.

Am I awake?—how came I here unveil'd
Among the bold and glaring eyes of men?

* In the prophecy of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and that of the world, it is said that, "as in the days of Noe, they shall marry and be given in marriage."—Matt. xxiv. 38.

THE JEWS.

Long live Salone! Long live Amariah!

SIMON.

He speaks from Heaven—accept'st thou, John of Galilee,
Heaven's terms of peace?

JOHN.

From earth or heaven, I care not—
What says my boy?

AMARIAH.

Oh! rather let me ask,
What says the maid? Oh! raven-hair'd Salone,
Why dost thou crowd thy jealous veil around thee?
Look on me freely; beauteous in thy freedom;
As when this morn I saw thee, on our walls,
Thy hair cast back, and bare thy marble brow
To the bright wooing of the enamour'd sun:
They were my banner, Beauty! those dark locks;
And in the battle 'twas my pride, my strength,
To think that eyes like thine were gazing on me.

SALONE.

Oh no, thou saw'st me not!—Oh, Amariah!
What Prophets speak must be fulfill'd. 'Twere vain
T' oppose at once the will of Heaven—and thee.

JOHN.

Now, if there be enough of generous food,
A cup of wine in all the wasted city,
We'll have a jocund revel.

SIMON.

Prophet Abiram,
I have a question for thy secret ear.
Thou man, whose eyes are purged from earthly film,
Seest thou no further down the tide of time?
Beyond this bridal nothing?—Answer me!
For it should seem this designated union
Of two so noble, this conspiring blood
Of Israel's chiefs, portends some glorious fruit
To ripen in the deep futurity.

ABIRAM.

Simon, what meanest thou?

SIMON.

The Hope of Israel?
Shall it not dawn from darkness? Oh! begot
In Judah's hour of peril, and conceived
In her extreme of agony, what birth
So meet and fitting for the great Discomfiter?

ABIRAM.

A light falls on me.

SIMON.

Prophet! what shall dye
The robe of purple with so bright a grain
As Roman blood? Before our gates are met
The lords of empire, and our walls may laugh
Their siege to scorn, even till the BRANCH be grown
That's not yet planted—Yea, the wrested sceptre

Of earth, the sole dominion——Back, Abiram,
To thy prophetic cave—kneel, pray, fast, weep;
And thou shalt bless us with far nobler tidings,
And we will kiss thy feet, thou Harbinger
Of Judah's glory——
Now lead on the Bridal.
Blow, trumpets! shout, exulting Israel!
Shout, Amariah! shout again, Salone!
Shout louder yet, the Bridegroom and the Bride!
Rejoice, oh Zion, now on all thy hills!
City of David, through thy streets rejoice!

Fountain of Siloe—Night—An approaching Storm.

MIRIAM.

He is not here! and yet he might have known,
That the cold gloom of the tempestuous skies
Could never change a faithful heart like mine.
He might have known me not a maid to love
Under the melting moonlight, and soft stars,
And to fall off in darkness and in storm.
Ah! seal'd for ever be my slanderous lips!
Alas! it is the bitterest pang of misery
That it will force from us unworthy doubts
Of the most tried and true. Oh, Javan, Javan!
It was but now that with presumptuous heart
I did repine against the all-gracious heavens,
That wrapt me round in charitable darkness.

Because my erring feet had well-nigh miss'd
Their known familiar path.

JAVAN, MIRIAM.

JAVAN.

What's there? I see
A white and spirit-like gleaming—It must be!
I see her not, yet feel that it is Miriam,
By the indistinct and dimly visible grace
That haunts her motions; by her tread, that falls
Trembling and soft like moonlight on the earth.
What dost thou here? now—now? where every moment
The soldiers prowl, and meeting sentinels
Challenge each other? I have watch'd for thee
As prisoners for the hour of their deliverance;
Yet did I pray, love! that thou might'st not come,
Even that thou might'st be faithless to thy vows,
Rather than meet this peril—Miriam,
Why art thou here?

MIRIAM.

Does Javan ask me why?
Because I saw my father pine with hunger—
Because——I never hope to come again.

JAVAN.

Too true! this night, this fatal night, if Heaven
Strike not their conquering host, the foe achieves
His tardy victory. Round the shatter'd walls
There is the smother'd hum of preparation.

With stealthy footsteps, and with muffled arms,
Along the trenches, round the lowering engines,
I saw them gathering: men stood whispering men,
As though revealing some portentous secret;
At every sound cried, 'Hist!' and look'd reproachfully
Upon each other. Now and then a light
From some far part of the encircling camp
Breaks suddenly out, and then is quench'd as suddenly.
The forced unnatural quiet, that pervades
Those myriads of arm'd and sleepless warriors,
Presages earthly tempest; as yon clouds,
That in their mute and ponderous blackness hang
Over our heads, a tumult in the skies—
The earth and heaven alike are terribly calm!

MIRIAM.

Alas! alas! give me the food! let 's say
Farewell, as fondly as a dying man
Should say it to a dying woman!

JAVAN.

Miriam!
It shall not be. *He*, *He* hath given command,
That when the signs are manifest, we should flee
Unto the mountains*.

MIRIAM.

Javan, tempt me not:
My soul is weak. Hast thou not said of old,
How dangerous 'tis to wrest the words of truth

* Matt. xxiv 16, and following verses.

To the excusing our own fond desires?
There's an eternal mandate, unrepeal'd,
Nor e'er to be rescinded, "Love thy Father!"
God speaks with many voices; one in the heart,
True though instinctive; one in the Holy Law,
The first that's coupled with a gracious promise.

JAVAN.

Yet are his words, "Leave all, and follow me,
"Thou shalt not love thy father more than me*"—
Dar'st disobey them?

MIRIAM.

Javan, while I tread
The path of duty I am following him,
And loving whom I ought to love, love him.

JAVAN.

If thou couldst save or succour—if this night
Were not the last—

MIRIAM.

Oh, dearest, think awhile!
It matters little at what hour o' the day
The righteous falls asleep; death cannot come
To him untimely who is fit to die:
The less of this cold world, the more of heaven;
The briefer life, the earlier immortality.
But every moment to the man of guilt
And bloodshed, one like——ah me! like my father,
Each instant rescued from the grasp of death,

* Matt. x. 7.

May be a blessed chosen opportunity
For the everlasting mercy—Think what 'tis
For time's minutest period to delay
An infidel's death, a murderer's——

JAVAN.

Go! go, dearest!
If I were dying, I would have thee go—
Oh! thou enspher'd, unearthly loveliness!
Danger may gather round thee, like the clouds
Round one of heaven's pure stars, thou 'lt hold within
Thy course unsullied.

MIRIAM.

This is worse than all!
Oh! mock not thus with wild extravagant praise
A very weak and most unworthy girl.
Javan, one last, one parting word with thee—
There have been times, when I have said light words,
As maidens use, that made thy kind heart bleed;
There have been moments, when I have seen thee sad,
And cruelly have sported with thy sadness:
I have been proud, oh! very proud, to hear
Thy fond lips dwell on beauty, when thine eyes
Were on this thin and wasted form of mine.
Forgive me, oh! forgive me, for I deem'd
The hour would surely come, when the fond bride
Might well repay the maiden's waywardness.
Oh! look not thus o'er-joyed, for if I thought
'We e'er could meet again this side the grave,

Trust me, I had been charier of my tenderness.
Yet one word more—I do mistrust thee, Javan,
Though coldly thou dost labour to conceal it;
Thou hast some frantic scheme to risk for mine
Thy precious life—Beseech thee, heap not thou
More sorrows on the o'erburthen'd.

JAVAN.

Think'st thou, then,
I have no trust but in this arm of flesh
To save thee?

MIRIAM.

Dearest Javan! pray not thou
That I may live, that is too wild a pray'r;
That I may die unspotted, be thy suit
To Him who loves the spotless.

JAVAN.

Ha—the thought!
It pierces like a sword into my heart!

MIRIAM.

And think'st thou mine unwounded;—Fare thee well!
Our presence does but rack each other's souls.
Farewell! and if thou lov'st when I am dead,
May she be to thee all I hoped to be.

JAVAN.

Go—go—

MIRIAM.

Thou bidd'st me part, and yet detain'st me
With clinging grasp—ah no, 'tis I clasp thee.

I knew not that my fond unconscious hand
Had been so bold—Oh, Javan! ere the morn
'T will have no power to offend thee—'t will be cold.

JAVAN.

Offend me! Miriam, when thou 'rt above
Among the Saints, and I in the sinful world,
How terrible it were if I should forfeit
The hope of meeting thee in blessedness!

MIRIAM.

Forfeit! with faith like thine?

JAVAN.

Thou well rebukest me.
To thy Redeemer I commit thee now.
To leave thee here, or take thee to himself.
Farewell, farewell! the life of this sad heart,—
Dearer than life——I look for thee, and lo!
Nought but blind darkness——
Save where yon mad city,
As though at peace and in luxurious joy,
Is hanging out her bright and festive lamps.

There have been tears from holier eyes than mine
Pour'd o'er thee, Zion! yea, the Son of Man
This thy devoted hour foresaw and wept.
And I—can I refrain from weeping? Yes,
My country! in thy darker destiny
Will I awhile forget my own distress.

I feel it now, the sad, the coming hour;
The signs are full, and never shall the sun
Shine on the cedar roofs of Salem more;
Her tale of splendor now is told and done:
Her wine-cup of festivity is spilt,
And all is o'er, her grandeur, and her guilt.

Oh! fair and favour'd city, where of old
The balmy airs were rich with melody,
That led her pomp beneath the cloudless sky
In vestments flaming with the orient gold;
Her gold is dim, and mute her music's voice;
The Heathen o'er her perish'd pomp rejoice.

How stately then was every palm-deck'd street,
Down which the maidens danced with tinkling feet;
How proud the elders in the lofty gate!
How crowded all her nation's solemn feasts
With white-rob'd Levites and high-mitred Priests;
How gorgeous all her Temple's sacred state!
Her streets are razed, her maidens sold for slaves,
Her gates thrown down, her elders in their graves;
Her feasts are holden 'mid the Gentiles' scorn,
By stealth her Priesthood's holy garments worn;
And where her Temple crown'd the glittering rock,
The wandering shepherd folds his evening flock.

When shall the work, the work of death begin?
When come the avengers of proud Judah's sin?—
Aceldama! accursed and guilty ground,
Gird all the city in thy dismal bound,
Her price is paid, and she is sold like thou;
Let every ancient monument and tomb
Enlarge the border of its vaulted gloom,
Their spacious chambers all are wanted now.
But never more shall yon lost city need
Those secret places for her future dead;
Of all her children, when this night is pass'd,
Devoted Salem's darkest, and her last,
Of all her children none is left to her,
Save those whose house is in the sepulchre.

Yet, guilty city, who shall mourn for thee?
Shall Christian voices wail thy devastation?
Look down! look down, avenged Calvary!
Upon thy late yet dreadful expiation.
Oh! long foretold, though slow accomplished fate,
"Her house is left unto her desolate;"
Proud Cæsar's ploughshare, o'er her ruins driven,
Fulfils at length the tardy doom of Heaven;
The wrathful vial's drops at length are pour'd
On the rebellious race that crucified their Lord!

Streets of Jerusalem—Night.

MANY JEWS MEETING.

FIRST JEW.

Saw ye it, father? saw ye what the city
Stands gazing at *? As I pass'd through the streets
There were pale women wandering up and down;
And on the housetops there were haggard faces
Turn'd to the heavens, where the ghostly light
Fell on them. Even the prowling plunderers,
That break our houses for suspected food,
Their quick and stealthful footsteps check, and gasp
In wonder. They, that in deep weariness,
Or wounded in the battle of the morn,
Had cast themselves to slumber on the stones,
Lift up their drowsy heads, and languidly
Do shudder at the sight.

SECOND JEW.

What sight? what say'st thou?

FIRST JEW.

The star, the star, the fiery-tressed star,
That all this fatal year hath hung in the heavens
Above us, gleaming like a bloody sword,
Twice hath it moved. Men cried aloud, "A tempest!"
And there was blackness, as of thunder clouds;

* The prodigies are related by Josephus in a magnificent page of historic description.

But yet that angry sign glared fiercely through them,
And the third time, with slow and solemn motion,
'Twas shaken and brandish'd.

SECOND JEW.

Timorous boy! thou speak'st
As though these things were strange. Why now we sleep
With prodigies ablaze in all the heavens,
And the earth teeming with portentous signs,
As sound as when the moon and constant stars
Beam'd quietly upon the slumbering earth
Their customary fires. Dost thou remember,
At Pentecost, when all the land of Judah
Stood round the Altar, at the dead of night,
A Light broke out, and all the Temple shone
With the meteorous glory? 'twas not like
The light of sun or moon, but it was clear
And bright as either, only that it wither'd
Men's faces to a hue like death.

THIRD JEW.

'Twas strange!
And, if I err not, on that very day
The Priest led forth the spotless sacrifice,
And, as he led it, it fell down, and cast
Its young upon the sacred pavement.

FOURTH JEW.

Brethren,
Have ye forgot the eve, when war broke out
Even in the heavens? all the wide northern sky

Was rocking with arm'd men and fiery chariots.
With an abrupt and sudden noiselessness,
Wildly, confusedly, they cross'd and mingled,
As when the Red Sea waves dash'd to and fro
The crazed cars of Pharaoh——

THIRD JEW.

Who comes here
In his white robes so hastily?

FIRST JEW.

'Tis the Levite,
The Holy Aaron.

LEVITE.

Brethren! Oh, my Brethren!

THE JEWS.

Speak, Rabbi, all our souls thirst for thy words.

LEVITE.

But now within the Temple, as I minister'd,
There was a silence round us; the wild sounds
Of the o'erwearied war had fallen asleep:
A silence, even as though all earth were fix'd
Like us in adoration—when the gate,
The Eastern gate, with all its ponderous bars
And bolts of iron, started wide asunder,
And all the strength of man doth vainly toil
To close the stubborn and rebellious leaves.

FIRST JEW.

What now?

ANOTHER JEW.

What now! why all things sad and monstrous.

The Prophets stand aghast, and vainly seek,
Amid the thronging and tumultuous signs
Which crowd this wild disastrous night, the intent
Of the Eternal. Wonder breaks o'er wonder,
As clouds roll o'er each other in the skies;
And Terror, wantoning with man's perplexity,
No sooner hath infix'd the awed attention
On some strange prodigy, than it straight distracts it
To a stranger and more fearful.

THIRD JEW.

Hark! what's there?
Fresh horror!——

(*At a distance.*)

To the sound of timbrels sweet*,
Moving slow our solemn feet,
We have borne thee on the road,
To the virgin's blest abode;
With thy yellow torches gleaming
And thy scarlet mantle streaming,
And the canopy above
Swaying as we slowly move.

Thou hast left the joyous feast,
And the mirth and wine have ceast;

* The bridal ceremonies are from Calmet, Harmer, and other illustrators of Scripture. It is a singular tradition that the use of the crown was discontinued after the fall of Jerusalem. A few peculiarities are adopted from an account of a Maronite wedding in Harmer.

And now we set thee down before
The jealously-unclosing door;
That the favour'd youth admits
Where the veiled virgin sits
In the bliss of maiden fear,
Waiting our soft tread to hear,
And the music's brisker din,
At the bridegroom's entering in,
Entering in a welcome guest
To the chamber of his rest.

SECOND JEW.

It is the bridal song of Amariah
And fair Salone. In the house of Simon
The rites are held; nor bears the Bridegroom home
His plighted Spouse, but there doth deck his chamber;
These perilous times dispensing with the rigor
Of ancient usage——

VOICE WITHIN.

Woe! woe! woe!

FIRST JEW.

Alas!
The son of Hananiah! is't not he?

THIRD JEW.

Whom said'st?

SECOND JEW.

Art thou a stranger in Jerusalem,
That thou rememberest not that fearful man?

FOURTH JEW.

Speak! speak! we know not all.

SECOND JEW.

Why thus it was:
A rude and homely dresser of the vine,
He had come up to the Feast of Tabernacles,
When suddenly a spirit fell upon him,
Evil or good we know not. Ever since
(And now seven years are past since it befel,
Our city then being prosperous and at peace,)
He hath gone wandering through the darkling streets
At midnight under the cold quiet stars;
He hath gone wandering through the crowded market
At noonday under the bright blazing sun,
With that one ominous cry of "Woe, woe, woe!"
Some scoff'd and mock'd him, some would give him food;
He neither curs'd the one, nor thank'd the other.
The Sanhedrin bade scourge him, and myself
Beheld him lash'd, till the bare bones stood out
Through the maim'd flesh, still, still he only cried,
"Woe to the City," till his patience wearied
The angry persecutors. When they freed him,
'Twas still the same, the incessant "Woe, woe, woe!"
But when our siege began, awhile he ceased,
As though his prophecy were fulfill'd; till now
We had not heard his dire and boding voice.

VOICE WITHIN.

Woe! woe! woe!

JOSHUA, *the Son of Hananiah.*

Woe! woe!
A voice from the East! a voice from the West!
From the four winds a voice against Jerusalem!
A voice against the Temple of the Lord!
A voice against the Bridegrooms and the Brides!
A voice against all people of the land!
Woe! woe! woe!

SECOND JEW.

They are the very words, the very voice
Which we have heard so long. And yet, methinks,
There is a mournful triumph in the tone
Ne'er heard before. His eyes, that were of old
Fix'd on the earth, now wander all abroad,
As though the tardy consummation
Afflicted him with wonder——Hark! again.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Now the jocund song is thine,
Bride of David's kingly line;
How thy dove-like bosom trembleth,
And thy shrouded eye resembleth
Violets, when the dews of eve
A moist and tremulous glitter leave
On the bashful sealed lid!
Close within the bride-veil hid,

Motionless thou sitt'st and mute;
Save that at the soft salute
Of each entering maiden friend
Thou dost rise and softly bend.

Hark! a brisker, merrier glee!
The door unfolds,—'tis he, 'tis he.
Thus we lift our lamps to meet him,
Thus we touch our lutes to greet him:
Thou shalt give a fonder meeting,
Thou shalt give a tenderer greeting.

JOSHUA.

Woe! woe!
A voice from the East! a voice from the West!
From the four winds a voice against Jerusalem!
A voice against the Temple of the Lord!
A voice against the Bridegrooms and the Brides!
A voice against all people of the land!
Woe! woe——[*Bursts away, followed by Second Jew.*

FIRST JEW.

Didst speak?

THIRD JEW.

No.

FOURTH JEW.

Look'd he on *us* as he spake?

FIRST JEW (*to the Second returning.*)

Thou follow'dst him! what now?

SECOND JEW.

'Twas a True Prophet!

THE JEWS.

Wherefore? Where went he?

SECOND JEW.

To the outer wall;
And there he suddenly cried out and sternly,
"A voice against the son of Hananiah!
"Woe, woe!" and at the instant, whether struck
By a chance stone from the enemy's engines, down
He sank and died!——

THIRD JEW.

There's some one comes this way—
Art sure he died indeed?

LEVITE.

It is the High-Priest.
The ephod gleams through the pale lowering night;
The breastplate gems, and the pure mitre-gold,
Shine lamplike, and the bells that fringe his robe
Chime faintly.

HIGH-PRIEST.

Israel, hear! I do beseech you,
Brethren, give ear!—

SECOND JEW.

Who 's he that will not hear
The words of God's High-Priest?

HIGH-PRIEST.

It was but now

I sate within the Temple, in the court
That's consecrate to mine office—Your eyes wander—

JEWS.

Go on!—

HIGH-PRIEST.

Why hearken then!—Upon a sudden
The pavement seem'd to swell beneath my feet,
And the Veil shiver'd, and the pillars rock'd.
And there, within the very Holy of Holies,
There, from behind the winged Cherubim,
Where the Ark stood, noise, hurried and tumultuous,
Was heard, as when a king with all his host
Doth quit his palace. And anon, a voice,
Or voices, half in grief, half anger, yet
Nor human grief nor anger; even it seem'd
As though the hoarse and rolling thunder spake
With the articulate words of man, it said,
"LET US DEPART!"

JEWS.

Most terrible! What follow'd?
Speak on! speak on!

HIGH-PRIEST.

I know not why, I felt
As though an outcast from the abandon'd Temple,
And fled.

JEWS.

Oh God! and Father of our Fathers!
Dost thou desert us?

CHORUS OF YOUTHS AND MAIDENS.

Under a happy planet art thou led,
Oh, chosen Virgin! to thy bridal bed.
So put thou off thy soft and bashful sadness,
And wipe away the timid maiden tear,—
Lo! redolent with the Prophet's oil of gladness,
And mark'd by heaven, the Bridegroom Youth is here.

FIRST JEW.

Hark—hark! an armed tread!

SECOND JEW.

The bold Ben Cathla.

BEN CATHLA.

Ay, ye are met, all met, as in a mart,
T' exchange against each other your dark tales
Of this night's fearful prodigies. I know it,
By the inquisitive and half-suspicious looks
With which ye eye each other, ye do wish
To disbelieve all ye have heard, and yet
Ye dare not. If ye have seen the moon unsphered,
And the stars fall; if the pale sheeted ghosts
Have met you wandering, and have pointed at you
With ominous designation; yet I scoff
Your poor and trivial terrors—Know ye Michol?

JEWS.

Michol!

BEN CATHLA.

The noble lady, she whose fathers
Dwelt beyond Jordan——

SECOND JEW.

Yes, we know her;
The tender and the delicate of women*,
That would not set her foot upon the ground
For delicacy and very tenderness.

BEN CATHLA.

The same!—We had gone forth in quest of food,
And we had entered many a house, where men
Were preying upon meagre herbs and skins;
And some were sating upon loathsome things
Unutterable the ravening hunger; some,
Whom we had plunder'd oft, laugh'd in their agony
To see us baffled. At her door she met us,
And "We have feasted together heretofore,"
She said, "most welcome, warriors!" and she led us,
And bade us sit like dear and honour'd guests,
While she made ready. Some among us wonder'd,
And some spake jeeringly, and thank'd the lady
That she had thus with provident care reserved
The choicest banquet for our scarcest days.

* "The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates." (Deuter. xxviii. 56 and 57.) See also Lamentations, ii. 20. The account of the unnatural mother is detailed in Josephus.

But ever as she busily minister'd,
Quick, sudden sobs of laughter broke from her.
At length the vessel's covering she raised up,
And there it lay——

HIGH-PRIEST.

What lay?—Thou 'rt sick and pale.

BEN CATHLA.

By earth and heaven, the remnant of a child!
A human child!——Ay, start! so started we—
Whereat she shriek'd aloud, and clapp'd her hands,
"Oh! dainty and fastidious appetites!
"The mother feasts upon her babe, and strangers
"Loathe the repast"—and then—"My beautiful child!
"The treasure of my womb! my bosom's joy!"
And then in her cool madness did she spurn us
Out of her doors. Oh still—oh still I hear her,
And I shall hear her till my day of death.

HIGH-PRIEST.

Great God of Mercies! this was once thy city!

CHORUS.

Joy to thee, beautiful and bashful Bride!
Joy! for the thrills of pride and joy become thee;
Thy curse of barrenness is taken from thee,
And thou shalt see the rosy infant sleeping
Upon the snowy fountain of thy breast;
And thou shalt feel how mothers' hearts are blest
By hours of bliss for moment's pain and weeping.
Joy to thee!

THE ABOVE, SIMON, JOHN.

SIMON.

Away! what do ye in our midnight streets?
Go sleep! go sleep! or we shall have to lash you,
When the horn summons to the morning's war,
From out your drowsy beds——Away! I say.

HIGH-PRIEST.

Simon, thou know'st not the dark signs abroad.

JOHN.

Ay! is't not fearful and most ominous
That the sun shines not at deep midnight? Mark me,
Ye men with gasping lips and shivering limbs,
Thou mitred priest, and ye misnamed warriors,
If ye infect with your pale aguish fears
Our valiant city, we'll nor leave you limbs
To shake, nor voices to complain—T' your homes.

SIMON, JOHN.

JOHN.

In truth, good Simon, I am half your proselyte;
Your angels, that do bear such excellent wine,
Might shake a faith more firm than ours.

SIMON.

Brave John,
My soul is jocund. Expectation soars
Before mine eyes, like to a new-fledged eagle,
And stoopeth from her heavens with palms ne'er worn

By brows of Israel. Glory mounts with her,
Her deep seraphic trumpet swelling loud
O'er Zion's gladdening towers.

JOHN.

Why, then, to sleep.
This fight by day, and revel all the night,
Need some repose—I'll to my bed—Farewell!

SIMON.

Brave John, farewell! and I'll to rest, and dream
Upon the coming honors of to-morrow.

MIRIAM.

To-morrow! will that morrow dawn upon thee?
I've warn'd them, I have lifted up my voice,
As loud as 'twere an angel's, and well nigh
Had I betray'd my secret: they but scoff'd,
And ask'd how long I had been a prophetess?
Then that injurious John did foully taunt me,
As though I envied my lost sister's bridal.
And when I clung to my dear father's neck,
With the close fondness of a last embrace,
He shook me from him.
But, ah me! how strange!
This moment, and the hurrying streets were full
As at a festival, now all's so silent
That I might hear the footsteps of a child.
The sound of dissolute mirth hath ceased, the lamps

Are spent, the voice of music broken off.
No watchman's tread comes from the silent wall,
There are nor lights nor voices in the towers.
The hungry have given up their idle search
For food, the gazers on the heavens are gone;
Even Fear 's at rest—all still as in a sepulchre!
And thou liest sleeping, oh Jerusalem!
A deeper slumber could not fall upon thee,
If thou wert desolate of all thy children,
And thy razed streets a dwelling-place for owls.
I do mistake! this is the Wilderness,
The Desert, where winds pass and make no sound,
And not the populous city, the besieged
And overhung with tempest. Why, my voice,
My motion, breaks upon the oppressive stillness
Like a forbidden and disturbing sound.
The very air 's asleep, my feeblest breathing
Is audible—I 'll think my prayers—and then——
——Ha! 'tis the thunder of the Living God!
It peals! it crashes! it comes down in fire!
Again! it is the engine of the foe,
Our walls are dust before it——Wake—oh, wake—
Oh Israel!—Oh Jerusalem, awake!
Why shouldst thou wake? thy foe is in the heavens!
Yea, thy judicial slumber weighs thee down,
And gives thee, oh lost city! to the Gentile
Defenceless, unresisting.
It rolls down,

As though the Everlasting raged not now
Against our guilty Zion, but did mingle
The universal world in our destruction;
And all mankind were destined for a sacrifice
On Israel's funeral pile. Oh Crucified!
Here, here, where thou didst suffer, I beseech thee
Even by thy Cross!
Hark! now in impious rivalry
Man thunders. In the centre of our streets
The Gentile trumpet, the triumphant shouts
Of onset; and I,—I, a trembling girl,
Alone, awake, abroad.
Oh, now ye wake.
Now ye pour forth, and hideous Massacre,
Loathing his bloodless conquest, joys to see you
Thus naked and unarm'd—But where's my father?—
Upon his couch in dreams of future glory.
Oh! where's my sister?——in her bridal bed!

MANY JEWS.

FIRST JEW.

To the Temple! To the Temple! Israel! Israel!
Your walls are on the earth, your houses burn
Like fires amid the autumnal olive grounds.
The Gentile's in the courts of the Lord's house.
To the Temple! save or perish with the Temple!

SECOND JEW.

To the Temple! haste, oh, all ye circumcised!

Stay not for wife or child, for gold or treasure!
Pause not for light! the heavens are all on fire,
The Universal City burns!

THIRD JEW.

Arms! Arms!
Our women fall like doves into the nets
Of the fowler, and they dash upon the stones
Our innocent babes. Arms! Arms! before we die
Let's reap a bloody harvest of revenge.
To the Temple!

FOURTH JEW.

Simon! lo, the valiant Simon.

THE ABOVE, SIMON.

SIMON.

He comes! he comes! the black night blackens with him,
And the winds groan beneath his chariot wheels—
He comes from heaven, the Avenger of Jerusalem!
Ay, strike, proud Roman! fall, thou useless wall!
And vail your heads, ye towers, that have discharged
Your brief, your fruitless duty of resistance.
I've heard thee long, fierce Gentile! th' earthquake shocks
Of thy huge engines smote upon my soul,
And my soul scorn'd them. Oh! and hear'st not thou
One mightier than thyself, that shakes the heavens?
Oh pardon, that I thought that He, whose comir
Is promised and reveal'd, would calmly wait
The tardy throes of human birth. Messiah,
I know thee now, I know yon lightning fire

Thy robe of glory, and thy steps in heaven
Incessant thundering.
I had brought mine arms,
Mine earthly arms, my breastplate and my sword,
To cover and defend me—Oh! but thou
Art jealous, nor endur'st that human arm
Intrude on thy deliverance. I forswear them,
I cast them from me. Helmless, with nor shield
Nor sword, I stand, and in my nakedness
Wait thee, victorious Roman——*

JEWS.

To the Temple!

SIMON.

Ay, well thou say'st, "to the Temple"—there 'twill be
Most visible. In his own house the Lord

* A friendly critic, the admirable Bishop Heber (*Quarterly Review*, vol. xxiii. p. 222), among his other animadversions on the Author's conception of the character of Simon, particularly objected to his coming forth "unarmed and inactive," and his final surrender on the frustration of his hopes, in the unchecked destruction of, as at length it seemed to him, the heaven-abandoned Temple. Perhaps Simon, the *Edomite*, may not have been judiciously chosen as the impersonation of this Pharisaic zealotism, which to the last clung to the hope of preternatural deliverance by the Messiah; but, as Simon could not but be the prominent character, and this the predominant feeling which constituted the poetry of this fanaticism, I cannot quite repent of the poetic licence which I have taken; nor can I discover anything incongruous in this high-wrought enthusiasm, either with the ambition, the craft, or the cruelty of Simon. The fact, that to this moment the Jews expected their deliverance from the appearance of the Messiah, appears from Josephus, who assigns, as the cause of the immense multitudes who at this moment had crowded into the Temple and perished in the unrelenting massacre, that a false prophet had predicted that on that very day "God commanded the people to go up to the Temple, to behold the signs of their salvation."—*Joseph.* B. J vi. 5. 2.

Will shine most glorious. Shall we not behold
The Fathers bursting from their yielding graves,
Patriarchs and Priests, and Kings and Prophets, met
A host of spectral watchmen, on the towers
Of Zion to behold the accomplishing
Of every Type and deep Prophetic word?
Ay, to the Temple! thither will I too,
There bask in all the fulness of the day
That breaks at length o'er the long night of Judah.

CHORUS OF JEWS,

(FLYING TOWARDS THE TEMPLE.)

Fly! fly! fly!
Clouds, not of incense, from the Temple rise,
And there are altar-fires, but not of sacrifice.
And there are victims, yet nor bulls nor goats;
And Priests are there, but not of Aaron's kin;
And he that doth the murtherous rite begin,
To stranger Gods his hecatomb devotes;
His hecatomb of Israel's chosen race
All foully slaughter'd in their Holy Place.

Break into joy, ye barren, that ne'er bore*!
Rejoice, ye breasts, where ne'er sweet infant hung!
From you, from you no smiling babes are wrung,
Ye die, but not amid your children's gore.

* "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days."—Matt. xxiv. 19.

But howl and weep, oh ye that are with child,
Ye on whose bosoms unwean'd babes are laid;
The sword that's with the mother's blood defiled
Still with the infant gluts the insatiate blade.

Fly! fly! fly!
Fly not, I say, for Death is every where,
To keen-eyed Lust all places are the same:
There's not a secret chamber in whose lair
Our wives can shroud them from th' abhorred shame.
Where the sword fails, the fire will find us there,
All, all is death—the Gentile or the flame.

On to the Temple! Brethren, Israel on!
Though every slippery street with carnage swims,
Ho! spite of famish'd hearts and wounded limbs,
Still, still, while yet there stands one holy stone,
Fight for your God his sacred house to save,
Or have its blazing ruins for your grave!

The Streets of Jerusalem.

MIRIAM.

Thou hard firm earth, thou wilt not break before me,
And hide me in thy dark and secret bosom?
Ye burning towers, ye fall upon your children
With a compassionate ruin—not on me—
Ye spare me only, I alone am mark'd

And seal'd for life: death cruelly seems to shun me,
Me, who am readiest and most wish to die.
Oh! I have sate me by the ghastly slain
In envy of their state, and wept a prayer
That I were cold like them, and safe from th' hands
Of the remorseless conqueror. I have fled,
And fled, and fled, and still I fly the nearer
To the howling ravagers—they are every where.
I've clos'd mine eyes, and rush'd I know not whither,
And still are swords and men and furious faces
Before me, and behind me, and around me.
But ah! the shrieks that come from out the dwellings
Of my youth's loved companions—every where
I hear some dear and most familiar voice
In its despairing frantic agonies.
Ah me! that I were struck with leprosy,
That sinful men might loathe me, and pass on.
And I might now have been by that sweet fountain
Where the winds whisper through the moonlight leaves,
I might have been with Javan there—Off, off—
These are not thoughts for one about to die—
Oh, Lord and Saviour Christ!

AN OLD MAN, MIRIAM.

OLD MAN.

Who spake of Christ?
What hath that name to do with saving here?
He 's here, he 's here, the Lord of desolation,

Begirt with vengeance! in the fire above,
And fire below! in all the blazing city
Behold him manifest!

MIRIAM.

Oh! aged man
And miserable, on the verge of the grave
Thus lingering to behold thy country's ruin,
What know'st thou of the Christ?

OLD MAN.

I, I beheld him,
The Man of Nazareth whom thou mean'st—I saw him,
When he went labouring up the accursed hill.
Heavily on his scourged and bleeding shoulders
Press'd the rough cross, and from his crowned brow
(Crown'd with no kingly diadem) the pale blood
Was shaken off, as with a patient pity
He look'd on us, the infuriate multitude.

MIRIAM.

Didst thou not fall and worship?

OLD MAN.

I had call'd
The curse upon my head, my voice had cried
Unto the Roman, "On us be his blood,
"And on our children!"—and on us it hath been—
My children and my children's children, all,
The Gentile sword hath reap'd them one by one,
And I, the last dry wither'd shock, await
The gleaning of the slaughterer.

MIRIAM.

Couldst thou see
The Cross, the Agony, and still hard of heart?

OLD MAN.

Fond child, I tell thee, ere the Cross was raised
He look'd around him, even in that last anguish,
With such a majesty of calm compassion,
Such solemn adjuration to our souls—
But yet 'twas not reproachful, only sad—
As though our guilt had been the bitterest pang
Of suffering. And there dwelt about him still,
About his drooping head and fainting limb,
A sense of power; as though he chose to die,
Yet might have shaken off the load of death
Without an effort. Awful breathlessness
Spread round, too deep and too intense for tears.

MIRIAM.

Thou didst believe?——

OLD MAN.

Away! Men glar'd upon me
As though they did detect my guilty pity;
Their voices roar'd around me like a tempest,
And every voice was howling, "Crucify him!"—
I dared not be alone the apostate child
Of Abraham——

MIRIAM.

Ah! thou didst not join the cry?

OLD MAN.

Woman, I did, and with a voice so audible

Men turn'd to praise my zeal. And when the darkness,
The noonday darkness, fell upon the earth,
And the earth's self shook underneath my feet,
I stood before the Cross, and in my pride
Rejoiced that I had shaken from my soul
The soft compunction.

MIRIAM.

Ha!—but now, oh! now,
Thou own'st him for the eternal Son of God,
The mock'd and scourg'd, and crown'd, and crucified.
Thou dost believe the blazing evidence
Of yon fierce flames! thou bow'st thyself before
The solemn preacher, Desolation,
That now on Zion's guilty ruins seated
Bears horrible witness.

OLD MAN.

Maiden, I believe them,
I dare not disbelieve; it is my curse,
My agony, that cleaves to me in death.

MIRIAM.

Oh! not a curse, it is a gracious blessing—
Believe, and thou shalt live!

OLD MAN.

Back, insolent!
What! would'st thou school these grey hairs, and become
Mine age's teacher?

MIRIAM.

Hath not God ordain'd
Wisdom from babes and sucklings?

OLD MAN.

Back, I say;
I have lived a faithful child of Abraham,
And so will die.

MIRIAM.

For ever!——He is gone,
Yet he looks round, and shakes his hoary head
In dreadful execration 'gainst himself
And me——I dare not follow him.
What's here?
It is mine home, the dwelling of my youth,
O'er which the flames climb up with such fierce haste.
Lo, lo! they burst from that house-top, where oft
My sister and myself have sate and sung
Our pleasant airs of gladness! Ah, Salone!
Where art thou now? These, these are not the lights
Which should be shining on a marriage-bed.
Oh! that I had been called to dress thy bier,
To pour sweet ointments on thy shrouded corpse,
Rather than thus to weave thee bridal chaplets
To be so madly worn, so early wither'd!
Where art thou? I dare only wish thee dead,
Even as I wish myself.
'Tis she, herself!
Thank God, she hath not perish'd in the flames!
'Tis she—she's here—she's here—the unfaded crown
Hanging from her loose tresses, and her raiment
Only the bridal veil wrapt round her——Sister!

Oh! by my mother's blessings on us both,
Stay, stay and speak to me—Salone!

SALONE.

Thee!
'Tis all thy bitter envy, that hath made
The exquisite music cease, and hath put out
The gentle lamps, and with a jealous voice
Hath call'd him from me.

MIRIAM.

Seest thou not, Salone,
The city 's all on fire, the foe's around us?

SALONE.

The fire! the foe! what 's fire or foe to me?
What 's aught but Amariah? He is mine,
The eagle-eyed, the noble and the brave,
The Man of Men, the glory of our Zion,
And ye have rent him from me.

MIRIAM.

Dearest, who?

SALONE.

I tell thee, he was mine, oh! mine so fondly,
And I was his—I had begun to dare
The telling how I loved him—and the night
It was so rapturously still around us—
When, even as though he heard a voice, and yet
There was no sound I heard, he sprung from me
Unto the chamber-door, and he look'd out
Into the city——

MIRIAM.

Well!—Nay, let not fall
Thy insufficient raiment——Merciful Heaven,
Thy bosom bleeds! What rash and barbarous hand
Hath——

SALONE.

He came back and kiss'd me, and he said—
I know not what he said—but there was something
Of Gentile ravisher, and his beauteous bride,—
Me, me he meant, he call'd me beauteous bride,—
And he stood o'er me with a sword so bright
My dazzled eyes did close. And presently,
Methought, he smote me with the sword, but then
He fell upon my neck, and wept upon me,
And I felt nothing but his burning tears.

MIRIAM.

She faints! Look up, sweet sister! I have staunch'd
The blood awhile—but her dim wandering eyes
Are fixing—she awakes—she speaks again.

SALONE.

Ah! brides, they say, should be retired, and dwell
Within in modest secrecy; yet here
Am I, a this night's bride, in the open street,
My naked feet on the cold stones, the wind
Blowing my raiment off—it's very cold—
Oh, Amariah! let me lay my head
Upon thy bosom, and so fall asleep.

MIRIAM.

There is no Amariah here—'tis I,
Thy Miriam.

SALONE.

The Christian Miriam!

MIRIAM.

Oh! that thou too wert Christian! I could give thee
A cold and scanty baptism of my tears.
Oh! shrink not from me, lift not up thy head,
Thy dying head, from thy loved sister's lap.

SALONE.

Off! set me free! the song is almost done,
The bridegroom 's at the door, and I must meet him,
Though my knees shake and tremble. If he come,
And find me sad and cold, as I am now,
He will not love me as he did.

MIRIAM.

Too true,
Thou growest cold indeed.

SALONE.

Night closes round,
Slumber is on my soul. If Amariah
Return with morning, glorious and adorn'd
In spoil, as he is wont, thou 'lt wake me, sister?
—— Ah! no, no, no! this is no waking sleep,
It bursts upon me—Yes, and Simon's daughter,
The bride of Amariah, may not fear,
Nor shrink from dying. My half-failing spirit

Comes back, my soft love-melted heart is strong:
I know it all, in mercy and in love
Thou 'st wounded me to death—and I will bless thee,
True lover! noble husband! my last breath
Is thine in blessing—Amariah!—Love!
And yet thou shouldst have staid to close mine eyes,
Oh Amariah!——and an hour ago
I was a happy bride upon thy bosom,
And now am——Oh God, God! if he have err'd,
And should come back again, and find me——dead!

MIRIAM.

Father of Mercies! she is gone an infidel,
An infidel unrepentant, to thy presence,
The partner of my cradle and my bed,
My own, my only sister!—oh! but thou,
Lord, knowest that thou hast not drawn her to thee,
By making the fond passions of the heart,
Like mine, thy ministers of soft persuasion.
She hath not loved a Christian, hath not heard
From lips, whose very lightest breath is dear,
Thy words of comfort.
I will cover her.
Thy bridal veil is now thy shroud, my sister,
And long thou wilt not be without a grave.
Jerusalem will bury all her children
Ere many hours are past.
There's some one comes——
A Gentile soldier——'tis the same who oft

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Hath cross'd me, and I've fled and 'scap'd him. Now,
How can I fly, and whither? Will the dead
Protect me? Ha! whichever way I turn,
Are others fiercer and more terrible.
I'll speak to him,—there's something in his mien
Less hideous than the rest.

MIRIAM, THE SOLDIER.

MIRIAM.

Oh! noble warrior,
I see not that thy sword is wet with blood:
And thou didst turn aside lest thou shouldst tread
Upon a dying man; and e'en but now,
When a bold ruffian almost seiz'd on me,
Thou didst stand forth and scare him from his prey.
Hast thou no voice? perhaps thou art deaf too,
And I am pleading unto closed ears—
——Keep from me! stand aloof! I am infected.
Oh! if the devil, that haunts the souls of men,
They say, with lawless and forbidden thoughts,
If he possess thee, here I lift my voice—
By Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I adjure
The evil spirit to depart from thee.
Alas! I feel thy grasp upon mine arm,
And I must follow thee. Oh! thou hast surely
In thine own land, in thine own native home,
A wife, a child, a sister: think what 'twere

To have a stranger's violent arms around her.
Ha! every where are more—and this man's hand
Did surely tremble; at the holy name
He seemed to bow his head. I'll follow thee,
Let me but kiss the body of my sister,
My dead lost sister——
Bless thee! and thou'lt spare me—
At least thou art less savage than the rest.
And He that had a Virgin mother, He
Will surely listen to a virgin's prayer.
There's hope and strength within my soul; lead on,
I'll follow thee——Salone, oh that thou
Hadst room in thy cold marriage bed for me!

The Front of the Temple.

SIMON.

They fight around the altar, and the dead
Heap the chok'd pavement. Israel tramples Israel,
And Gentile Gentile, rushing where the Temple,
Like to a pit of frantic gladiators,
Is howling with the strife of men, that fight not
For conquest, but the desperate joy of slaying.
Priests, Levites, women, pass and hurry on,
At least to die within the sanctuary.
I only wait without—I take my stand
Here in the vestibule—and though the thunders
High and aloof o'er the wide arch of heaven

Hold their calm march, nor deviate to their vengeance,
On earth, in holy patience, Lord, I wait,
Defying thy long lingering to subdue
The faith of Simon.

'Twas but now I passed
The corpse of Amariah, that display'd
In the wild firelight all its wounds, and lay
Embalm'd in honour. John of Galilee
Is prisoner; I beheld him fiercely gnashing
His ponderous chains. Of me they take no heed,
For I disdain to tempt them to my death,
And am not arm'd to slay.

The light within
Grows redder, broader. 'Tis a fire that burns
To save or to destroy. On Sinai's top,
Oh Lord! thou didst appear in flames, the mountain
Burnt round about thee. Art thou here at length,
And must I close mine eyes, lest they be blinded
By the full conflagration of thy presence?

TITUS, PLACIDUS, TERENTIUS, SOLDIERS, SIMON.

TITUS.

Save, save the Temple! Placidus, Terentius,
Haste, bid the legions cease to slay; and quench
Yon ruining fire.

Who's this, that stands unmoved
Mid slaughter, flame, and wreck, nor deigns to bow

Before the Conqueror of Jerusalem?
What art thou?

SIMON.

Titus, dost thou think that Rome
Shall quench the fire that burns within yon Temple?
Ay, when your countless and victorious cohorts,
Ay, when your Cæsar's throne, your Capitol,
Have fallen before it.

TITUS.

Madman, speak! what art thou?

SIMON.

The uncircumcis'd have known me heretofore,
And thou may'st know hereafter.

PLACIDUS.

It is he—
The bloody Captain of the Rebels, Simon,
The Chief Assassin. Seize him, round his limbs
Bind straight your heaviest chains. An unhop'd pageant
For Cæsar's high ovation. We 'll not slay him,
Till we have made a show to the wives of Rome
Of the great Hebrew Chieftain.

SIMON.

Knit them close,
See that ye rivet well their galling links.
(*Holding up the chains.*)
And ye 've no finer flax to gyve me with?

TERENTIUS.

Burst these, and we will forge thee stronger then.

SIMON.

Fool, 'tis not yet the hour.

TITUS.

Hark! hark! the shrieks
Of those that perish in the flames. Too late
I came to spare, it wraps the fabric round.
Fate, Fate, I feel thou 'rt mightier than Cæsar,
He cannot save what thou hast doom'd! Back, Romans,
Withdraw your angry cohorts, and give place
To the inevitable ruin. Destiny,
It is thine own, and Cæsar yields it to thee.
Lead off the prisoner.

SIMON.

Can it be? the fire
Destroys, the thunders cease. I'll not believe,
And yet how dare I doubt?
A moment, Romans,
Is 't then thy will, Almighty Lord of Israel,
That this thy Temple be a heap of ashes?
Is 't then thy will, that I, thy chosen Captain,
Put on the raiment of captivity?
By Abraham, our father! by the Twelve,
The Patriarch Sons of Jacob! by the Law,
In thunder spoken! by the untouch'd Ark!
By David, and the Anointed Race of Kings!
By great Elias, and the gifted Prophets!
I here demand a sign!
'Tis there—I see it.

The fire that rends the Veil!
We are then of thee
Abandon'd——not abandon'd of ourselves.
Heap woes upon us, scatter us abroad,
Earth's scorn and hissing; to the race of men
A loathsome proverb; spurn'd by every foot,
And curs'd by every tongue; our heritage
And birthright bondage; and our very brows
Bearing, like Cain's, the outcast mark of hate:
Israel will still be Israel, still will boast
Her fallen Temple, her departed glory;
And, wrapt in conscious righteousness, defy
Earth's utmost hate, and answer scorn with scorn*.

* The capture of Simon was in fact attended by circumstances almost as extraordinary, and with a tendency to supernatural effect, at least as striking. The unity of the Poem prevented me from following the true history, which I venture to transcribe in my own words.—"Many days after, towards the end of October, when Titus had left the city, as some of the Roman soldiers were reposing amid the ruins of the Temple, they were surprised by the sudden apparition of a man in white raiment, and with a robe of purple, who seemed to rise from the earth in silent and imposing dignity. At first they stood awe-struck and motionless: at length they ventured to approach him; they encircled him, and demanded his name. He answered, 'Simon, the son of Gioras; call hither your general.' Terentius Rufus was speedily summoned, and to him the brave, though cruel, defender of Jerusalem surrendered himself. On the loss of the city, Simon had leaped down into one of the vaults, with a party of miners, hewers of stone, and iron workers. For some distance they had followed the natural windings of the cavern, and then attempted to dig their way out beyond the walls; but their provisions, however carefully husbanded, soon failed, and Simon determined on the bold measure of attempting to over-awe the Romans by his sudden and spectral appearance. News of his capture was sent to Titus; he was ordered to be set apart for the imperial triumph."—*Hist. of Jews*, vol. iii. p. 67.

The Fountain of Siloe.

MIRIAM, THE SOLDIER.

MIRIAM.

Here, here—not here—oh! any where but here—
Not toward the fountain, not by this lone path.
If thou wilt bear me hence, I'll kiss thy feet,
I'll call down blessings, a lost virgin's blessings
Upon thy head. Thou hast hurried me along,
Through darkling street, and over smoking ruin,
And yet there seem'd a soft solicitude,
And an officious kindness in thy violence—
But I've not heard thy voice.
Oh, strangely cruel!
And wilt thou make me sit even on this stone,
Where I have sate so oft, when the calm moonlight
Lay in its slumber on the slumbering fountain?
Ah! where art thou, thou that wert ever with me,
Oh Javan! Javan!

THE SOLDIER.

When was Javan call'd
By Miriam, that Javan answer'd not?
Forgive me all thy tears, thy agonies.
I dar'd not speak to thee, lest the strong joy
Should overpower thee, and thy feeble limbs
Refuse to bear thee in thy flight.

MIRIAM.

What's here?
Am I in heaven, and thou forehasted thither

To welcome me? Ah, no! thy warlike garb,
And the wild light, that reddens all the air,
Those shrieks——and yet this could not be on earth,
The sad, the desolate, the sinful earth.
And thou couldst venture amid fire and death,
Amid thy country's ruins to protect me,
Dear Javan!

JAVAN.

'Tis not now the first time, Miriam,
That I have held my life a worthless sacrifice
For thine. Oh! all these later days of siege
I've slept in peril, and I've woke in peril.
For every meeting I've defied the cross,
On which the Roman, in his merciless scorn,
Bound all the sons of Salem. Sweet, I boast not;
But to thank rightly our Deliverer,
We must know all the extent of his deliverance.

MIRIAM.

And I can only weep!

JAVAN.

Ay, thou shouldst weep,
Lost Zion's daughter.

MIRIAM.

Ah! I thought not then
Of my dead sister, and my captive father—
Said they not "captive" as we passed?—I thought not
Of Zion's ruin and the Temple's waste.
Javan, I fear that mine are tears of joy;

'Tis sinful at such times—but thou art here,
And I am on thy bosom, and I cannot
Be, as I ought, entirely miserable.

JAVAN.

My own beloved! I dare call thee mine,
For Heaven hath given thee to me—chosen out,
As we two are, for solitary blessing,
While the universal curse is pour'd around us
On every head, 'twere cold and barren gratitude
To stifle in our hearts the holy gladness.

But, oh Jerusalem! thy rescued children
May not, retir'd within their secret joy,
Shut out the mournful sight of thy calamities.

Oh, beauty of earth's cities! throned queen
Of thy milk-flowing valleys! crown'd with glory!
The envy of the nations! now no more
A city——One by one thy palaces
Sink into ashes, and the uniform smoke
O'er half thy circuit hath brought back the night
Which the insulting flames had made give place
To their untimely terrible day. The flames
That in the Temple, their last proudest conquest,
Now gather all their might, and furiously,
Like revellers, hold there exulting triumph.
Round every pillar, over all the roof,
On the wide gorgeous front, the holy depth
Of the far sanctuary, every portico,
And every court, at once, concentrated,

As though to glorify, and not destroy,
They burn, they blaze——
Look, Miriam, how it stands!
Look!

MIRIAM.

There are men around us!

JAVAN.

They are friends,
Bound here to meet me, and behold the last
Of our devoted city. Look, oh Christians!
Still the Lord's house survives man's fallen dwellings,
And wears its ruin with a majesty
Peculiar and divine. Still, still it stands,
All one wide fire, and yet no stone hath fallen.
Hark—hark!
The feeble cry of an expiring nation.
Hark—hark!
The awe-struck shout of the unboasting conqueror.
Hark—hark!
It breaks—it severs—it is on the earth.
The smother'd fires are quench'd in their own ruins:
Like a huge dome, the vast and cloudy smoke
Hath cover'd all.
And it is now no more,
Nor ever shall be to the end of time,
The Temple of Jerusalem!——Fall down,
My brethren, on the dust, and worship here
The mysteries of God's wrath.

Even so shall perish,
In its own ashes, a more glorious Temple,
Yea, God's own architecture, this vast world,
This fated universe—the same destroyer,
The same destruction——Earth, Earth, Earth, behold!
And in that judgment look upon thine own!

HYMN.

Even thus amid thy pride and luxury,
Oh Earth! shall that last coming burst on thee,
That secret coming of the Son of Man.
When all the cherub-throning clouds shall shine,
Irradiate with his bright advancing sign:
When that Great Husbandman shall wave his fan,
Sweeping, like chaff, thy wealth and pomp away:
Still to the noontide of that nightless day,
Shalt thou thy wonted dissolute course maintain.
Along the busy mart and crowded street,
The buyer and the seller still shall meet,
And marriage feasts begin their jocund strain:
Still to the pouring out the Cup of Woe;
Till Earth, a drunkard, reeling to and fro,
And mountains molten by his burning feet,
And Heaven his presence own, all red with furnace heat.

The hundred-gated Cities then,
The Towers and Temples, nam'd of men
Eternal, and the Thrones of Kings;
The gilded summer Palaces,

The courtly bowers of love and ease,
Where still the Bird of Pleasure sings;
Ask ye the destiny of them?
Go gaze on fallen Jerusalem!
Yea, mightier names are in the fatal roll,
'Gainst earth and heaven God's standard is unfurl'd.
The skies are shrivell'd like a burning scroll,
And the vast common doom ensepulchres the world.

Oh! who shall then survive?
Oh! who shall stand and live?
When all that hath been is no more:
When for the round earth hung in air,
With all its constellations fair
In the sky's azure canopy;
When for the breathing Earth, and sparkling Sea,
Is but a fiery deluge without shore,
Heaving along the abyss profound and dark,
A fiery deluge, and without an Ark.

Lord of all power, when thou art there alone
On thy eternal fiery-wheeled throne,
That in its high meridian noon
Needs not the perish'd sun nor moon:
When thou art there in thy presiding state,
Wide-sceptred Monarch o'er the realm of doom:
When from the sea depths, from earth's darkest womb,
The dead of all the ages round thee wait:

And when the tribes of wickedness are strewn
Like forest leaves in the autumn of thine ire:
Faithful and True! thou still wilt save thine own!
The Saints shall dwell within th' unharming fire,
Each white robe spotless, blooming every palm.
Even safe as we, by this still fountain's side,
So shall the Church, thy bright and mystic Bride,
Sit on the stormy gulf a halcyon bird of calm.
Yes, mid yon angry and destroying signs,
O'er us the rainbow of thy mercy shines,
We hail, we bless the covenant of its beam,
Almighty to avenge, Almightiest to redeem.

THE MARTYR OF ANTIOCH.

CHARACTERS.

OLYBIUS, *Prefect of the East.*
VOPISCUS.
MACER, *Governor of the City.*
CALLIAS, *Priest of Apollo.*

FABIUS, *Bishop of Antioch.*
DIODOTUS, } *Christians.*
CHARINUS, }
CALANTHIAS, }

Officers.
Citizens.

Christians.
A Shepherd.

MARGARITA, *daughter of Callias.*
Maidens of Antioch.

SCENE—*Antioch in the reign of the Emperor Probus.*

INTRODUCTION.

This poem is founded on the following part of the History of Saint Margaret. She was the daughter of a heathen priest, and beloved by Olybius, the Prefect of the East, who wished to marry her. The rest of the legend I have thought myself at liberty to discard, and to fill up the outline as my own imagination suggested. Gibbon has so well condensed all the information which remains to us from Strabo, Chrysostom, Sozomen, and the writings of Julian the Apostate, relative to Antioch, the Temple and sacred grove of Daphne, that the reader will be able to comprehend, from his florid, perhaps too glowing, description, most of the allusions to these subjects contained in the poem. The passage occurs in his twenty-third chapter.

The martyrologists have dwelt almost exclusively on the outward and bodily sufferings of the early Christians. They have described with almost anatomical precision the various methods of torture. The consequence has been, the neglect of their writings; in perusing which a mind of the least sensibility shrinks with such loathing and abhorrence from the tedious detail of suffering, as to become insensible to the calm resignation, the simple devotion, the exulting hope of the sufferer. But these writers have rarely and briefly noticed the internal and mental agonies to which the same circumstances inevitably exposed the converts. The sur-

render of life, when it appeared most highly gifted with the blessings of Providence; the literal abandonment of this world, when all its pleasures, its riches, and its glories were in their power; the violent severing of those ties, which the gentle spirit of Christianity had the more endeared; the self-denial not of the ungodly lusts, but of the most innocent affections; that last and most awful conflict, when "brother delivered brother unto death, and the father the child," when "a man's foes were those of his own household,"—it was from such trials, not those of the fire and the stake alone, that the meek religion of Christ came forth triumphant. In such a situation it has been my object to represent the mind of a young and tender female; and I have opposed to Christianity the most beautiful and the most natural of Heathen superstitions—the worship of the Sun. The reader, it is to be hoped, will recollect that although the following poem is in most part a work of imagination, there were multitudes who really laid down their lives for the faith of Christ, under circumstances equally appalling and afflictive; for that faith, to the truth or falsehood of which they had demonstrative evidence in their power and in their possession.

Long since the publication of this Poem, I have become, by an amusing coincidence, the minister of a church dedicated to St. Margaret. But the Legend of St. Margaret in Westminster differs very much, not merely from my version of the story, but from the authorities on which it was founded. According to a short privately printed tract, relating to the curiosities of that church, St. Margaret "was an

Alexandrian Saint, skilled in theological controversy ; but in disputation with the deceiver (Diabolus), the old dragon; she was hit by a syllogism which impugned her faith, and which she could not parry ; the old dragon instantly had power over her, and opening his jaws swallowed her whole. She felt embarrassed in her new situation, but soon bethought herself to trace the sign of the Cross on the inner surface of the Dragon's stomach. The effect was instantaneous : he staggered and fell, his stomach exploded, and the female saint sprang up with the palm of victory in her hand. All this is represented, in massive silver, at the head of the beadles' staves, and the workmanship, especially of the dragon, is not unworthy of inspection."

I am not disposed to enter into a controversy with my beadle's staff, as to the correctness of our different versions of this legend. I shall appeal, to reconcile our differences, to one of the best of the modern Latin poets, who, in a hymn to St. Margaret, has combined the two stories. Vida, like myself, officiated in a church dedicated to St. Margaret, in Cremona.

> Nunc te, Diva, canam, quando tua templa sacerdos
> Ingredior, custosque tuæ novus addicor aræ.

Vida, who was bishop of Alba, rebuilt the Church of St. Margaret, in his native city of Cremona.

> Margarita, tuam, senium quam everterat, ædem
> Vida tibi è patrio marmore restituit.

The munificent work of rebuilding my Church of St. Margaret, if it should be found necessary in order to open the Abbey and the new Houses of Parliament, I must leave to Mr. Barry and the House of Commons.

In the hymn of Vida, the Dragon is introduced, but not with the same fulness of detail as in the silver work of the beadles' staves.

> Nympha, decus cœli, quam late fama sequuta est
> Per gentes cæcum non expavisse draconem,
> Squamigerum, ingentem, et cristis capita alta ferentem.

But on my own side I have her resistance to the human adversary, who offered her boundless wealth, and, in his passionate love, offered to marry her—

> Non te vesani valuit vis ulla tyranni
> Vertere, non diræve minæ flexere, precesve,
> Non ingens auri pondus, non munera opima.
> Ille tuo ardebat nimium crudeliter igni,
> Optabatque tuos thalamos accensus amore.

I have likewise the Bishop's authority for her exquisite beauty—

> Quandoquidem Armenias par forma inventa per urbes
> Nulla, tamen multæ Armenias viguere per urbes.

With regard to her father, I will merely quote the following sentence from Alban Butler's "Lives of the Saints," July 20, the day consecrated to St. Margaret, in the old Roman order, and in the most ancient Calendars of the Greeks.

"She is said to have been * * prosecuted by her own father, a priest of the Idols."

In one point, I have knowingly departed from the Legend, in substituting the celebrated Syrian Antioch for the more obscure Antioch in Pisidia.

THE

MARTYR OF ANTIOCH.

SCENE—*The Front of the Temple of Apollo, in the Daphne near Antioch.*

OLYBIUS, MACER, ROMANS, CITIZENS OF ANTIOCH, CALLIAS, PRIESTS.

CHORUS OF YOUTHS.

Lord of the golden day!
That hold'st thy fiery way,
Out-dazzling from the heavens each waning star;
What time Aurora fair
With loose dew-dropping hair,
And the swift Hours have yoked thy radiant car.

Thou mountest Heaven's blue steep,
And the universal sleep
From the wide world withdraws its misty veil;
The silent cities wake,
Th' encamped armies shake
Their unfurl'd banners in the freshening gale.

The basking earth displays
Her green breast in the blaze;
And all the Gods upon Olympus' head
In haughty joy behold
Thy trampling coursers bold
Obey thy sovereign rein with stately tread.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Lord of the speaking lyre!
That with a touch of fire
Strik'st music, which delays the charmed spheres;
And with a soft control
Dost steal away the soul,
And draw from melting eyes delicious tears—

Thou the dead hero's name
Dost sanctify to fame,
Embalm'd in rich and ever-fragrant verse;
In every sunlit clime,
Through all eternal time
Assenting lands his deathless deeds rehearse.

The lovesick damsel, laid
Beneath the myrtle shade,
Drinks from thy cup of song with raptured ear,
And, dead to all around,
Save the sweet bliss of sound,
Sits heedless that her soul's beloved is near.

CHORUS OF YOUTHS.

Lord of the unerring bow,
Whose fateful arrows go
Like shafts of lightning from the quivering string:
Pierced through each scaly fold,
Enormous Python roll'd,
While thou triumphant to the sky didst spring;

And scorn and beauteous ire
Steep'd with ennobling fire
Thy quivering lip and all thy beardless face;
Loose flew thy clustering hair,
While thou the trackless air
Didst walk in all thine own celestial grace.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Lord of the holy spring,
Where the Nine Sisters sing,
Their dearest haunt, our Syrian Castaly:
There oft the entranced maid,
By the cool waters laid,
Feels all her labouring bosom full of thee:

The kings of earth stand near
In pale religious fear;
The purple Sovereign of imperial Rome
In solemn awe hath heard
The wild prophetic word,
That spake the cloud-wrapt mystery of his doom.

CHORUS OF YOUTHS.

Lord of the gorgeous shrine,
Where to thy form divine
The snow-white line of lessening pillars leads*:
And all the frontispiece,
And every sculptured frieze,
Is rich and breathing with thy god-like deeds.

Here by the lulling deep
Thy mother seems to sleep
On the wild margin of the floating isle;
Her new-born infants, thou,
And she the wood-Nymph now,
Lie slumbering on her breast, and slumbering smile.

Here in her pride we see
The impious Niobe,
Mid all her boasted race in slaughter piled,
Folding in vain her vest,
And cowering with fond breast
Over her last, her youngest loveliest child.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Lord of the cypress grove,
That here in baffled love
The soft Thessalian maid didst still pursue;

* The colossal statue of Apollo, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, was equal in size to the Olympian Jupiter, which was sixty feet high—Simulachrum in eo Olympiaci Jovis imitamenti æquiparens magnitudinem.—*Am. Marc.* lib. xxii. c. 13.

Until her snowy foot
In the green earth took root,
And in thine arms a verdant laurel grew.

And still thy tenderest beams
Over our falling streams
At shadowy eve delight to hover long;
They to Orontes' tide
In liquid music glide
Through banks that blossom their sweet course along.

And still in Daphne's bower
Thou wanderest many an hour,
Kissing the turf by her light footsteps trod;
And nymphs at noontide deep
Start from their dreaming sleep,
And in his glory see the bright-hair'd God*.

CHORUS OF YOUTHS AND MAIDENS.

Phœbus Apollo, hear!
Great Lycian king, appear,
Come from thy Cynthian steep or Xanthus' shore,
Here to thy Syrian home
In visible godhead come,
And o'er our land thy choicest influence pour.

* The spot was ennobled by fiction; and the fancy of the Syrian Poets had transported the amorous tale (of Daphne) from the banks of the Peneus to those of the Orontes. The ancient rites of Greece were imitated by the royal colony of Antioch. A stream of prophecy, which rivalled the truth and reputation of the Delphic oracle, flowed from the *Castalian* fountain of Daphne.—*Gibbon*, ch. xxiii. vol. iv. p. 111. Edit. 1838.

CALLIAS.

Break off the hymn. And now the solemn rites
Are duly paid; the hundred steers have bled;
O'er all the Temple the rich incense curls
In clouds of fragrance! and the golden cups
In generous libation have pour'd forth
The honied wine; and all along the shade
Of sacred Daphne hath your pomp been led,
Waking the slumbering echoes from their caves,
To multiply the adoring Io Pæan
To great Apollo.

SECOND PRIEST.

Callias! our God,
That yesterday on our Elean games
Shone with a splendor, even as though a veil,
Which to that day had dimm'd his full divinity,
Had been rent off; our God hath center'd now
As 'twere the gather'd light of many moons
Within his orb to honour this our festival.

MACER.

Nor wonder! for did ever elder Greece,
When all her cities and her kings were met
On the Olympic plain*, or where the priestess
Sate, speaking fate, upon her Delphic tripod,
With richer rite, or statelier ceremony,

* In the adjacent fields a stadium was built by a special privilege, which had been purchased from Elis; the Olympic games were celebrated at the expense of the city; and a revenue of thirty thousand pounds sterling was annually applied to the public pleasures.—*Gibbon*, ch. xxiii. vol. iv, p. 111. Edit. 1838.

With nobler or more spotless hecatombs,
Propitiate the immortal Gods?

OLYBIUS.

Great Rome
Herself not costlier.

MACER.

What, then, is wanting?

SECOND PRIEST.

What, but the crown and palm-like grace of all,
The sacred virgin, on whose footsteps Beauty
Waits like a handmaid; whose most peerless form,
Light as embodied air, and pure as ivory
Thrice polish'd by the skilful statuary,
Moves in the priestess' long and flowing robes,
While our scarce-erring worship doth adore
The servant rather than the God.

THIRD PRIEST.

The maid
Whose living lyre so eloquently speaks,
From the deserted grove the silent birds
Hang hovering o'er her; and we human hearers
Stand breathless as the marbles on the walls,
That even themselves seem touch'd to listening life,
All animate with the inspiring ecstasy.

FIRST ROMAN.

Thou mean'st the daughter of the holy Callias;
I once beheld her, when the thronging people
Press'd round, yet parted still to give her way,

Even as the blue enamour'd waves, when first
The sea-born Goddess in her rosy shell
Sail'd the calm ocean.

SECOND PRIEST.

Margarita, come,
Come in thy zoneless grace, thy flowing locks
Crown'd with the laurel of the God; the lyre
Accordant to thy slow and musical steps,
As grateful 't would return the harmony,
That from thy touch it wins.

THIRD PRIEST.

Come, Margarita.
This long, this bashful, timorous delay
Beseems thee well, and thou wilt come the lovelier,
Even like a late long-look'd for flower in spring.

SECOND PRIEST.

Still silent! some one of the sacred priests
Enter, and in Apollo's name call forth
The tardy maiden.

CALLIAS.

Shame upon the child,
Who thus will make th' assembled lords of Antioch,
And sovereign Rome's imperial Prefect, wait
Her wayward pleasure.

FOURTH PRIEST (*returning from within*).

Callias!

CALLIAS.

Ha! what now?—

FOURTH PRIEST.

Callias!

CALLIAS.

Hath lightning smitten thee to silence?
Or hath some sinister and angry sign,
The bleeding statue of the god, or birds
Obscene within the secret sanctuary,
Appall'd thee?

FOURTH PRIEST.

In the holy place we sought her;
Trampled in dust we found the laurel crown,
The lyre unstrung cast down upon the pavement,
And the dishonour'd robes of prophecy
Scatter'd unseemly here and there—and——

CALLIAS.

What?

FOURTH PRIEST.

And Margarita was not there.

CALLIAS.

Not there!
My child not there! Prefect Olybius,
This is thy deed—I knew that thou didst love her,
And mine old heart was proud to see thee stand
Before her presence, awed; the sovereign lord
Of Asia, Rome's renown'd and consular captain,
Awed by my timid, blushing child; whom now
His Roman soul hath nobly dared to rend
From her afflicted father.

OLYBIUS.

Holy Callias,
By Mars, my god, thou wrong'st me!

CALLIAS.

Oh, my lord!
Tyrant, not lord! inhuman ravisher!
Dissembling Tarquin!—but it is no fable
That great Apollo once avenged his priest,
When broke the wasting plague o'er Agamemnon,
And all the myriad ships of Greece.

OLYBIUS.

Old man,
But that thy daughter's unforgotten loveliness
Hallows thy wrath——

CALLIAS.

By Heaven! yet I'll have justice,
If I do travel to the emperor's throne.
I'll raise a cry so loud, that all the palace
In which great Cæsar dwells, the Capitol,
And every stone within the Eternal City,
Shall with my wrongs resound. Ah, fond old man!
My trembling limbs have lost their only stay,
And that sweet voice that utter'd all my wishes,
Reading them in my secret heart within,
Shall never thrill again upon mine ears!
I may go wandering forth another Œdipus,
But with no fond Antigone——

CITIZENS.

Hark! hark!
A trumpet sound! a messenger from Rome.

CALLIAS.

From Rome! from Rome! it is thy doom, destroyer!
The sunbeams have beheld thy deed of shame,
And have proclaim'd it; the arraigning winds
Have blown my injuries and thy disgrace
Over the wide face of the listening earth;
And Cæsar's arm of justice is outstretch'd
To strike and punish!

THE ABOVE, VOPISCUS.

VOPISCUS.

Great Olybius,
I am the bearer of the emperor's mandate,
Would I might add of wonted thanks and praise.
'Tis said that here in Antioch, the high place
And chosen sanctuary of those Galileans,
Who with their godless and incestuous rites
Offend the thousand deities of Rome,
Making them waste our mildew'd lands with dearth,
Attaint our wholesome air with pestilence,
And shake th' indignant earth, even till our cities,
With all their unwarn'd multitudes sink down
Into the sudden yawning chasms beneath them!—
'Tis said, even here Olybius hath let sleep

The thunders of the law, which should have smitten
With the stern frequency of angry Jove,
When with fierce storms he darkens half the world!
Wherefore, instead of flying in close haunts,
And caves, and woods, the stern extermination,
They climb our palaces, they crowd our camps,
They cover all our wide and boundless realms;
While the sad Priests of all our Gods do sit
Round their cold altars and ungifted shrines,
Waiting in vain for victim or oblation.

OLYBIUS.

It moves no wonder that Vopiscus comes
To taunt with negligence Olybius' rule,
Not ignorant that Vopiscus were well pleased
If that this Eastern Prefecture should pass
To abler hands, perchance his own.—To the charge.
It is most true that I have sought to stay
This frenzy, not with angry fire and sword,
But with a lofty and contemptuous mercy,
That scorn'd too much to punish. For my heart
Was sick of seeing beardless youth and age
Wearying the pall'd and glutted executioner;
Exhausting all the subtlest arts of torture
With cheerful patience: even soft maidens moving,
With flower-crown'd locks, and pale but smiling cheeks,
To the consuming fire as to their bridal.
I saw in this wild scorn of death a grandeur
Worthy a nobler cause; 'twas Roman virtue,

Though not for Roman glory. But, Vopiscus,
I am not one that wears a subject's duty
Loose and cast off whene'er the changeful will
Would clothe itself in sole authority.
The edict of the Emperor is to me
As the unrepealed word of fate. To death
It doth devote these Christians, and to death
My voice shall doom them. Not Vopiscus self,
Whom I invite to share my stern tribunal,
But shall confess th' obedience of Olybius.

THE PEOPLE.

Long live the Christians' scourge!—long live Olybius!
Haste, drag them forth, the accursed of our gods.

SECOND PRIEST.

She comes—she is here—the beauteous Margarita.

CALLIAS.

My child! and thou art breathing still!—Come back
Unto my desolate heart—thy father, child——
These choking tears! they would not flow but now.

MARGARITA.

Dear father!

CALLIAS.

But, sweet daughter, how is this,
Upon our solemn day of festival,
Thus darkly clad, and on thy close-bound locks
Ashes, and sackcloth on thy tender limbs!

MARGARITA.

I thought the rites had been o'erpass'd ere now,
Or——

CALLIAS.

Hath the god afflicted thee, my child?

MARGARITA.

My God, indeed, afflicts me, father.

OLYBIUS.

Priests!
We mourn, that we must leave th' imperfect rites,
Deeply we mourn it, when bright Margarita
Vouchsafes her late and much-desired presence.
So then to-morrow for our Judgment Hall.
Let all the fires be kindled, and bring forth
The long-disused racks, and fatal engines.
Their rust must be wash'd off in blood. Proclaim
That every guilty worshipper of Christ
Be dragg'd before us.—Ha!——

MACER.

What frantic cry
With insolent interruption breaks upon
Rome's Prefect?

MANY VOICES.

Lo the priestess! Lo the priestess!

SECOND PRIEST.

She hath fall'n down upon her knees; her hair
Is scatter'd like a cloud of gold; her hands
Are clasp'd across her swelling breast; her eyes
Do hold a sad communion with the heavens,
And her lips move, yet make no sound.

THIRD PRIEST.

Haste—haste—

The laurel crown—the laurel of the God—
She's rapt—possess'd!

MARGARITA.

The crown—the crown of glory—
God give me grace upon my bleeding brows
To wear it.

SECOND PRIEST.

She is distracted by our gaze—
She shrinks and trembles. Lead her in, the trance
Will pass anon, and her unsealed lips
Pour forth the mystic numbers, that men hear,
And feel the inspiring deity.

OLYBIUS.

On—away!

THE PEOPLE.

Long live the Christians' scourge!—long live Olybius!

CHORUS AROUND THE TEMPLE.

Phœbus Apollo hear,
Great Lycian king appear,
Come from thy Cynthian steep, or Xanthus' shore;
Here to thy Syrian home,
In visible godhead come,
And o'er our land thy choicest influence pour.

CHORUS AROUND OLYBIUS.

Go on thy flow'r-strewn road,
The champion of our god,
By Phœbus' self his chosen chief confess'd;

His brightest splendors bask
Upon thy glowing casque;
And gild the waving glories of thy crest.

The Grove of Daphne.—Evening.

MARGARITA.

My way is through the dim licentious Daphne,
And evening darkens round my stealthful steps;
Yet I must pause to rest my weary limbs.
Oh, thou polluted, yet most lovely grove!
Hath the Almighty breathed o'er all thy bowers
An everlasting spring, and paved thy walks
With amaranthine flowers—are but the winds,
Whose breath is gentle, suffer'd to entangle
Their light wings, not unwilling prisoners,
In thy thick branches, there to make sweet murmurs
With the bees' hum, and melodies of birds,
And all the voices of the hundred fountains,
That drop translucent from the mountain's side,
And lull themselves along their level course
To slumber with their own soft-sliding sounds;
And all for foul idolatry, or worse,
To make itself a home and sanctuary?
Oh, second Eden, like the first, defiled
With sin* ! even like thy human habitants,

* The Daphnici mores were proverbial:—Syriacas legiones luxuriâ diffluentes et Daphnicis moribus.—*Original Letter of Marcus Antoninus, in Hist. August.*

Thy winds and flowers and waters have forgot
The gracious hand that made them, ministers
Voluptuous to man's transgressions—all,
Save thou, sweet nightingale! that, like myself,
Pourest alone thy melancholy song
To silence and to God——not undisturb'd—
The velvet turf gives up a quickening sound
Of coming steps:—Oh, thou that lov'st the holy,
Protect me from the sinful—from myself!
'Twas what I fear'd—Olybius!

OLYBIUS, MARGARITA.

OLYBIUS.

Margarita,
I heard but now that thou hadst wander'd hither,
And follow'd thee, my love.

MARGARITA.

My lord, mine haste
Brooks no delay.

OLYBIUS.

What sudden speed is this?
Behold the Sun, our God——

MARGARITA.

Not so, my lord.

OLYBIUS.

What! thou 'rt become a tender worshipper
Of yon pale crescent, that alone in heaven

Breathes o'er the world her cold serenity.
Trust me, my sweet, it is a barren service.

MARGARITA.

My lord, I do beseech you let me pass,
I have nor time nor wish——

OLYBIUS.

Ha, Margarita!
At this luxurious hour, when all is mute
But the fond lover at his mistress' ear,
Through the dusk grove, where every conscious tree
Bears in its bark the record of fond vows
And amorous service——

MARGARITA.

Hath the Prefect seen
Aught loose in Callias' daughter, aught unholy,
That he would breathe suspicion's tainting blight
On the pure lily of her fame?

OLYBIUS.

Ungrateful!
I have endured this day for thee the taunts
Of thy distracted sire; but will not bear
The thought, that thou art hurrying hence to hear
Some favour'd lover pour into thy soul——

MARGARITA.

Olybius, thou dost not truly think it—
I had forgot——Lord Prefect, thou art tyrannous,
That thus with harsh and most untimely violence
Imped'st my way.

OLYBIUS.

Fond maiden, know'st thou not
That I am clothed with power? my word, my sign,
May drag to death, whoe'er presumes to love
Th' admired of great Olybius.

MARGARITA (*apart*).

My full heart!
And hath it not a guilty pleasure still
In being so fondly, though so sternly chided?

OLYBIUS.

Hear me, I say, but weep not, Margarita,
Though thy bright tears might diadem the brow
Of Juno, when she walks th' Olympian clouds.
My pearl! my pride! thou know'st my soul is thine—
Thine only! On the Parthians' fiery sands
I look'd upon the blazing noontide sun,
And thought how lovely thou before his shrine
Wast standing with thy laurel-crowned locks.
And when my high triumphal chariot toil'd
Through Antioch's crowded streets, when every hand
Rain'd garlands, every voice dwelt on my name,
My discontented spirit panted still
For thy long silent lyre.

MARGARITA.

Oh! let me onward,
Nor hold me thus, nor speak thus fondly to me.

OLYBIUS.

Thou strivest still to leave me; go then, go,

My soul disdains to force what it would win
With the soft violence of favour'd love.
But ah, to-day—to-day—what meant thine absence
From the proud worship of thy God? what mean
Thy wild and mournful looks, thy bursting eyes
So full of tears, that weep not?—Margarita,
Thou wilt not speak—farewell, then, and forgive
That I have dared mistrust thee:—No, even now,
Even thus I'll not believe but thou art pure,
As the first dew that Dian's early foot
Treads in her deepest, holiest shade.—Farewell!

MARGARITA.

I should have told him all, yet dared not tell him—
I could not deeper wound his generous heart
Than it endures already. My Redeemer,
If weakly thus before the face of man
I have trembled to confess thee, yet, oh Lord,
Before thine angels do not thou deny me.
And yet, he is not guilty yet, oh Saviour,
Of Christian blood! Preserve him in thy mercy,
Preserve him from that sin.—Ah, lingering still,
While lives of thousands hang upon my speed,
Away!

The Burial Place of the Christians.—Night.

FABIUS, DIODOTUS, CHARINUS, CALANTHIAS, &c.

FUNERAL ANTHEM.

Brother, thou art gone before us, and thy saintly soul is flown
Where tears are wiped from every eye, and sorrow is unknown;
From the burthen of the flesh, and from care and fear released,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

The toilsome way thou'st travell'd o'er, and borne the heavy load,
But Christ hath taught thy languid feet to reach his blest abode.
Thou'rt sleeping now, like Lazarus upon his father's breast,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

Sin can never taint thee now, nor doubt thy faith assail,
Nor thy meek trust in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit fail.
And there thou'rt sure to meet the good, whom on earth thou lovedst best,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

"Earth to earth," and "dust to dust," the solemn priest
hath said,
So we lay the turf above thee now, and we seal thy
narrow bed;
But thy spirit, brother, soars away among the faithful
blest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary
are at rest.

And when the Lord shall summon us, whom thou hast
left behind,
May we, untainted by the world, as sure a welcome
find;
May each, like thee, depart in peace, to be a glorious
guest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary
are at rest.

FABIUS.

So, by the side of martyr'd Babylas*,
Brother, thou slumberest; silent as yon stars,
And silent as the falling dews around thee,
We leave thy verdant grave. But oh! shall we,
When we put off the load of mortal life,
Depart like thee as in a deeper sleep,
With the sweet smile of life on the closed lips,
Or in an agony of mortal pain,
By the pitch'd stake, or den of raging lions?

* Babylas, bishop of Antioch, suffered martyrdom in the persecution under the emperor Decius. Chrysostom has two homilies concerning his life and death.

THE ABOVE, MARGARITA.

MARGARITA.

I'm here at last before them, and ye live.

FABIUS.

What means the gentle Neophyte?

MARGARITA.

Good sir,
Thou hast not heard——Hark—hark! they are behind me.

FABIUS.

Who, maiden, who?

MARGARITA.

The Prefect's ruthless soldiers;
They come to drag us to their Judgment Hall.
Already is the scourge prepared; the dungeons
Ope their expecting gates; the outpour'd city
Pants for the spectacle.

FABIUS.

Is it so, my child?
Makes the fierce Heathen bloody preparation
For slaughter—then must we for death. His zeal
Doth furbish up his armoury of murder;
We, ours of patience. We must gird around us
Heaven's panoply of faith and constancy,
And so go forth to war.

MARGARITA.

Alas! alas!
If they should take thee—thee, upon whose lips
The living fire of inspiration burns,

Severing by gentle force the willing spirit
From this low earth, and pluming it for heaven;
That makes the conscious immortality
Stir in our souls, and pant for that pure life
With Christ beyond the grave. Oh, thou that teachest
Our charities to flow in heaven's own light,
Like some bright river in the desert sands,
Round which the gladdening pilgrims sing for joy;
That send'st us forth to pour sweet oil and wine
Into the bleeding wounds; to take our seat
By the sick couch; to shed a tender health
On the pale prisoner's cheek—Oh, who shall lead
The foldless sheep to life's eternal pastures
When their good shepherd's gone?

FABIUS.

Hast thou forgot
The Master of the flock?

MARGARITA.

Oh, no—no—no—
But how shall I endure to see thy head,
Thy venerable head, bow'd down to scorn?
I have call'd thee father, and have fondly pray'd
That mine own parent were like thee; and now
I must behold thy blood flow drop by drop
Beneath the knotted scourge, or hungry fires
Preying upon thy shuddering flesh.

FABIUS.

My child,
Think thou each lash that rends my bleeding skin

A beauteous sign of brotherhood with Christ;
That the pale fire which wastes my perishing flesh
Is heaven's own lambent glory gathering round me.

CHARINUS.

Why now, most holy Fabius, I had look'd
For joy and triumph on thy brow, to hear
That we may mount the everlasting heavens
In those angelic chariots, wont to wrap
The Martyr's spirit. Lo! the eternal gates
Lift up their heads to greet us! Shall we then
Waver and pause? or shall we not go forth
Through all the city to the Roman's throne
Hymning our Christ, and calling on our heads
The glorifying axe?

CALANTHIAS.

Away! I see
The waving of the purple robe. The Lord
Shall tread even now the wine-press in his wrath;
The signs are labouring forth, the latter days
Run to their dregs. He comes t' avenge his own.
No more, no more, your vain and baffled songs,
"Holy and True, how long?" ascend to heaven—
The day of vintage, and the day of dread,
The day of desolation is at hand,
The day of vengeance!

FABIUS.

Cease, Calanthias, cease;
And thou, Charinus. Oh, my brethren, God

Will summon those whom he hath chosen, to sit
In garments dyed with their own blood around
The Lamb in Heaven; but it becomes not man
To affect with haughty and aspiring violence
The loftiest thrones, ambitious for his own,
And not his Master's glory. Every star
Is not a sun, nor every Christian soul
Wrapt to a seraph. But for thee, Calanthias,
Thou know'st not whether even this night shall burst
The impatient vengeance of the Lord, or rest
Myriads of human years. For what are they,
What are our ages, but a few brief waves
From the vast ocean of eternity,
That break upon the shore of this our world,
And so ebb back into the immense profound,
Which He on high, even at one instant, sweeps
With his omniscient sight.

Beloved brethren,
And ye, our sisters, hold we all prepared,
Like him beside whose hallow'd grave we stand,
To give the last and awful testimony
To Christ our Lord. Yet tempt not to our murder
The yet unbloody hands of men.

They come:
Pale lights are gleaming through the dusky night,
And hurrying feet are trampling to and fro.
Disperse—disperse, my brethren, to your homes!—
Sweet Margarita, in the Hermitage

By clear Orontes, where so oft we've met,
Thou'lt find me still. God's blessing wait on all!
Farewell! we meet, if not on earth, in heaven.

The Front of the Temple.—Day-break.

MARGARITA.

Yet once again I touch thy golden strings,
My silent and forgotten lyre, oh! erst
The joy of Antioch, when on festal days
At the proud idol's foot I sate; and all,
Even as thy raptures rose and fell, bow'd down
Or stood erect before the shrine. I, too,
Like thee, was hallow'd to an impious service,
Even till a touch from heaven waked my soul's music,
And pour'd it forth in ecstasy to him
Who died for men. And shalt not thou, my partner
In mine unholy worship, mingle now
Thy sweetness with my purer vows. Oh! fountain
Of sounds delicious, shall I not unseal thee,
Thou that didst flow through Daphne's flowery grove,
Timing the dancing steps of youths and maids?
Dwell not within thy secret wreathed shell
Sounds full of chaste and holy melancholy,
As ever mourn'd in angels' moonlight chants
O'er the night-visited graves of buried saints—
Even sounds accordant to the weary steps
Of him, that, loaded with the ponderous cross,
Toil'd up the steep of Calvary?

CALLIAS, MARGARITA.

CALLIAS.

My child,
My own, my loved, my beauteous child! once more
Thou art thyself; thy snowy hands are trembling
On thy loved lyre, and doubtless thou art hailing
Our God, who from his golden eastern chamber
Begins to dawn. I have commanded all
The ministering priests and sacred virgins
Their robes and verdant chaplets to prepare.
Thou too shalt come, with all thy richest songs
To hymn the triumph of our God around
The pile whereon these frantic Galileans
Writhe and expire.

MARGARITA.

My father!

CALLIAS.

What is this?
Wilt thou not go?

MARGARITA.

Alas! I shall be there
Too surely.

CALLIAS.

Ay, and when thy ivory brows
Are dimly shaded by the laurel crown;
And when thy snowy robes in folds of light
Enwrap thee, like the glittering ocean foam
In which the sea nymph bowers her gliding form;
The God shall make thy breast his shrine, and pour

Such all-enchanting harmony around thee,
Men's senses, spell-bound by their captive hearing,
Shall own the manifest godhead, and bow down
In worship.

MARGARITA.

Ah, that thou and all might know
The God that hath possess'd me—would adore
The eternal words of light and life and truth
That I could utter!

CALLIAS.

Oh my child! my pride!
While the infected daughters of the land
Fall off to this new faith; while they are led
To expiate in the fire their sinful deeds,
How shall I gaze on thee, through Daphne gliding
Amid thy white-robed choir of sacred maids,
Like the presiding swan on smooth Cayster,
And bless Apollo, that hath stamp'd thy soul
His own.

MARGARITA (*apart*).

Ah me! and how t'unbarb the dart,
Which I must strike into his inmost soul!

CALLIAS.

Thrice-dearest of our god!

MARGARITA.

Beloved father!
Those tender maids led forth to sacrifice,
To bear upon their blushing, delicate limbs

Rude stripes and shameful insults, have they not
Fond parents, loving as thyself, whose hearts
Weep blood, more fast than even their flowing wounds?
Oh think on her, thy Margarita, her—
The breathing image thou hast often call'd her
Of thy youth's bride—exposed to pain, to death!
To worse—to nameless shame!

CALLIAS.

When Margarita
Hath from her God revolted, I'll endure
Even that, or more.

MARGARITA.

No, father, no, thou couldst not,
Thou wilt not, when she meets her Christian brethren,
Patient to bear their Master's mournful lot
Of suffering and of death——

CALLIAS.

How? what? mine ears
Ring with a wild confusion of strange sounds
That have no meaning. Thou'rt not wont to mock
Thine aged father, but I think that now
Thou dost, my child.

MARGARITA.

By Jesus Christ—by him
In whom my soul hath hope of immortality,
Father! I mock not.

CALLIAS.

Lightnings blast——not thee,
But those that by their subtle incantations

Have wrought upon thy innocent soul.

Look there!—

MARGARITA.

Father, I'll follow thee where'er thou wilt:
Thou dost not mean this cruel violence
With which thou dragg'st me on.

CALLIAS.

Dost not behold him,
Thy God! thy father's God! the God of Antioch!
And feel'st thou not the cold and silent awe,
That emanates from his immortal presence
O'er all the breathless temple? Dar'st thou see
The terrible brightness of the wrath that burns
On his arch'd brow? Lo, how the indignation
Swells in each strong dilated limb! his stature
Grows loftier; and the roof, the quaking pavement,
The shadowy pillars, all the temple feels
The offended God!—I dare not look again,
Dar'st thou?

MARGARITA.

I see a silent shape of stone,
In which the majesty of human passion
Is to the life express'd. A noble image,
But wrought by mortal hands, upon a model
As mortal as themselves.

CALLIAS.

Ha! look again, then,
There in the East. Mark how the purple clouds

Throng to pavilion him: the officious winds
Pant forth to purify his azure path
From night's dun vapours and fast-scattering mists.
The glad earth wakes in adoration; all
The voices of all animate things lift up
Tumultuous orisons; the spacious world
Lives but in him, that is its life. But he,
Disdainful of the universal homage,
Holds his calm way, and vindicates for his own
Th' illimitable heavens, in solitude
Of peerless glory unapproachable.
What means thy proud undazzled look, to adore
Or mock, ungracious?

MARGARITA.

On yon burning orb
I gaze, and say,—Thou mightiest work of him
That launch'd thee forth, a golden-crowned bridegroom,
To hang thy everlasting nuptial lamp
In the exulting heavens. In thee the light,
Creation's eldest born, was tabernacled.
To thee was given to quicken slumbering nature,
And lead the seasons' slow vicissitude
Over the fertile breast of mother earth;
Till men began to stoop their grovelling prayers
From the Almighty Sire of all to thee.
And I will add,—Thou universal emblem,
Hung in the forehead of the all-seen heavens,
Of him, that with the light of righteousness

Dawn'd on our latter days; the visitant dayspring
Of the benighted world. Enduring splendor!
Giant refresh'd! that evermore renew'st
Thy flaming strength; nor ever shalt thou cease,
With time coeval, even till Time itself
Hath perish'd in eternity. Then thou
Shalt own, from thy apparent deity
Debased, thy mortal nature, from the sky
Withering before the all-enlightening Lamb,
Whose radiant throne shall quench all other fires.

CALLIAS.

And yet she stands unblasted! In thy mercy
Thou dost remember all my faithful vows,
Hyperion! and suspend the fiery shaft
That quivers on thy string. Ah, not on her,
This innocent, wreak thy fury! I will search,
And thou wilt lend me light, although they shroud
In deepest Orcus. I will pluck them forth,
And set them up a mark for all thy wrath;
Those that beguiled to this unholy madness
My pure and blameless child. Shine forth, shine forth,
Apollo, and we'll have our full revenge!

[*He departs.*

MARGARITA (*alone*).

'Tis over now—and oh, I bless thee, Lord,
For making me thus desolate below;
For severing one by one the ties that bind me
To this cold world, for whither can earth's outcasts

Fly but to heaven?
Yet is no way but this,
None but to steep my father's lingering days
In bitterness? Thou knowest, gracious Lord
Of mercy, how he loves me, how he loved me
From the first moment that my eyes were open'd
Upon the light of day and him. At least,
If thou must smite him, smite him in thy mercy.
He loves me as the life-blood of his heart,
His love surpasses every love but thine.

HYMN.

For thou didst die for me, oh Son of God!
By thee the throbbing flesh of man was worn;
Thy naked feet the thorns of sorrow trod,
And tempests beat thy houseless head forlorn.
Thou, that were wont to stand
Alone, on God's right hand,
Before the Ages were, the Eternal, eldest born.

Thy birthright in the world was pain and grief,
Thy love's return ingratitude and hate;
The limbs thou healedst brought thee no relief,
The eyes thou openedst calmly view'd thy fate:
Thou, that wert wont to dwell
In peace, tongue cannot tell
Nor heart conceive the bliss of thy celestial state.

They dragg'd thee to the Roman's solemn Hall,
Where the proud Judge in purple splendor sate;
Thou stoodst a meek and patient criminal,
Thy doom of death from human lips to wait;
Whose throne shall be the world
In final ruin hurl'd,
With all mankind to hear their everlasting fate.

Thou wert alone in that fierce multitude,
When "Crucify him!" yell'd the general shout;
No hand to guard thee mid those insults rude,
Nor lip to bless in all that frantic rout;
Whose lightest whisper'd word
The Seraphim had heard,
And adamantine arms from all the heavens broke out.

They bound thy temples with the twisted thorn,
Thy bruised feet went languid on with pain;
The blood, from all thy flesh with scourges torn,
Deepen'd thy robe of mockery's crimson grain;
Whose native vesture bright
Was the unapproached light,
The sandal of whose foot the rapid hurricane.

They smote thy cheek with many a ruthless palm,
With the cold spear thy shuddering side they pierced;
The draught of bitterest gall was all the balm
They gave, t' enhance thy unslaked, burning thirst:

Thou, at whose words of peace
Did pain and anguish cease,
And the long buried dead their bonds of slumber burst.

Low bow'd thy head convulsed, and, droop'd in death,
Thy voice sent forth a sad and wailing cry;
Slow struggled from thy breast the parting breath,
And every limb was wrung with agony.
That head, whose veilless blaze
Fill'd angels with amaze,
When at that voice sprang forth the rolling suns on high.

And thou wert laid within the narrow tomb,
Thy clay-cold limbs with shrouding grave-clothes bound;
The sealed stone confirm'd thy mortal doom,
Lone watchmen walk'd thy desert burial ground,
Whom heaven could not contain,
Nor th' immeasurable plain
Of vast Infinity inclose or circle round.

For us, for us, thou didst endure the pain,
And thy meek spirit bow'd itself to shame,
To wash our souls from sin's infecting stain,
T' avert the Father's wrathful vengeance flame:
Thou, that couldst nothing win
By saving worlds from sin,
Nor aught of glory add to thy all-glorious name.

The Prefect's Hall of Justice.

OLYBIUS, VOPISCUS, MACER, PRIEST, ROMANS, &c.
CALLIAS.

DIODOTUS, CHARINUS, CALANTHIAS, AND OTHER CHRISTIANS.

PRIEST.

The sacrifice hath pleased the immortal Gods.
With willing foot the golden-horned steer
Moved to the altar, and in proud delight
Shook the white fillet on his brow: the blood
Pour'd forth its purple stream profuse; the Aruspex
Gazed on the perfect entrails; and the smoke
Rose in a full unbroken cloud. Great Prefect,
Thy deed is holy to our Gods.

OLYBIUS.

The Gods,
Whose honour we espouse, espouse our cause.
Hear me, ye Priests on earth, ye Gods in heaven!
By Vesta, and her virgin-guarded fires;
By Mars, the Sire and guardian God of Rome;
By Antioch's bright Apollo; by the throne
Of him whose thunder shakes the vaulted skies;
And that dread oath I add, that binds th' immortals,
The unblessed waters of Tartarian Styx:
Last, by the avengers of despised vows,
Th' inevitable serpent-hair'd Eumenides;
Olybius swears, thus mounting on the throne
Of justice, to exhaust heaven's wrath on all

That have cast off their fathers' Gods for rites
New and unholy. From my heart I blot
Partial affection and the love of kindred;
Even if my father's blood flow'd in their veins,
I would obey the Emperor, and the Gods!

VOPISCUS.

So nobly said, as nobly be it done.

OLYBIUS.

Lead forth the prisoners!
Ye of nobler birth,
Diodotus, Charinus, and Calanthias,
And ye, the baser and misguided multitude,
Ye stand denounced before our solemn throne
As guilty of that Galilean faith,
Whose impious and blaspheming scorn disdains
Our fathers' Gods; ye serve not in our temples;
Crown not our altars; kneel not at our shrines;
And in their stead, in loose and midnight feasts
Ye meet, obscuring with a deeper gloom
Of shame and horror night's chaste brow.

DIODOTUS.

Olybius!
Were these foul deeds as true as they are false,
We might return, that we but imitate
The Gods ye worship—ye, who deify
Adultery, and throne incest in the skies:
Who, not content with earth's vast scope defiled,
Advance the majesty of human sin

Even till it fills the empyreal heavens. Ye sit
Avengers of impure, unhallow'd licence.
'Tis well:—why summon then your Gods to answer,
Wrest the idle thunderbolt from amorous Jove,
Dispeople all Olympus,—ay, draw down
The bright-hair'd Sun from his celestial height,
To give accompt of that most fond pursuit
Through yon dim grove of cypress.

OLYBIUS.

Do we wonder
That Heaven rains plagues upon the guilty earth;
That Pestilence is let loose, and Famine stalks
O'er kingdoms, withering them to barrenness;
That reeling cities shake, and the swoln seas
Engulf our navies, or with sudden inroad
Level our strong-wall'd ports! But, impious men,
We will no longer share your doom; nor suffer
Th' indiscriminate vengeance from on high
To plunge mankind in wide promiscuous ruin:
Impatient earth shall shake you from her bosom,
Even as a city spurns the plague-struck man
From her barr'd gates, lest her attainted airs
Be loaded with his breath.

DIODOTUS.

Hath earth but now
Begun to heave with fierce intestine fires,
Or the hot South from his unwholesome wings
Drop pestilence? Have changeless slumbers lock'd

Th' untempested and stagnant seas, and now
Awake they first to whelm your fleets and shores?
But be it so, that angry nature rages
More frequent in her fierce distemperature.
Upon yourselves, ye unbelieving Heathen,
The crime recoils. The Lord of Hosts hath walked
This world of man; the One Almighty sent
His everlasting Son to wear the flesh,
And glorify this mortal human shape.
And the blind eyes unclosed to see the Lord;
And the dumb tongues brake out in songs of praise;
And the deep grave cast forth its wondering dead;
And shuddering devils murmur'd sullen homage:
Yet him, the meek, the merciful, the just,
Upon the Cross his rebel people hung,
And mock'd his dying anguish. Since that hour,
Like flames of fire his messengers have pass'd
O'er the wide world, proclaiming him that died
Risen from the grave, and in omnipotence
Array'd on high; and as your lictors wait
Upon your earthly pomp, portentous signs
And miracles have strew'd the way before them.
But still the princes of the earth take counsel
Against the Eternal. Still the Heathen rage
In drunken fury. Therefore hath the earth
Espoused its Maker's cause; the heavens are full
Of red denouncing fires; the elements
Take up the eternal quarrel, and arise

To battle on God's side. The universe,
With one wide voice of indignation, heard
In every plague and desolating storm,
Proclaims her deep abhorrence at your sins.

OLYBIUS.

Diodotus, thou once didst share our love;
I knew thee as a soldier, valiant; wise,
I thought thee; therefore once again I stoop
To parley with thy madness. Noble warrior,
Wouldst thou that Rome, whose Gods have raised her up
To empire, boundless as the ocean-girt
And sun-enlighten'd earth; that by the side
Of her victorious chariot still have toil'd,
While there were hosts t' enslave or realms to conquer;
That have attended on her ranging eagles
Till the winds fail'd them in their trackless flight;—
Wouldst thou that, now upon her powers meridian,
Ungrateful she should spurn the exhausted aid
Of her old guardian Deities, and disclaim
Her ancient worship*? Did not willing Jove
His delegated sceptre o'er the world
Grant to our fathers? Did not arm'd Gradivus

* This was the argument, which was urged again and again, during the long period of the simultaneous decay of the Roman greatness, and the progress of Christianity. It was uttered, as it were, by the dying voice of Paganism in the celebrated oration of Symmachus; to which St. Ambrose and the poet Prudentius replied. St. Augustine's great work, the City of God, was designed as a full and conclusive decision of this solemn question.

His Thracian coursers urge before our van,
Strawing our foes, as the wild hurricane
The summer corn? Where shone the arms of Rome,
That our great sire Quirinus look'd not down
Propitious from his high Olympian seat?
And shall we now forsake their hallow'd fanes,
Rich with our fathers' piety: refuse
The solemn hecatomb; dismiss the flamen
From his proud office; rend the purple robe
Pontifical, and leave each sumptuous shrine
A nesdling place for foul unhallow'd birds?

DIODOTUS.

Olybius, thou wrong'st our Roman glory.
No fabled Thunderer, nor the fiery car
Of Mavors, nor long-buried Romulus,
Set up great Rome to awe the subject world:
It was her children's valour, that dared all things,
And what it dared, accomplish'd. Rome herself,
Th' Almighty willing her imperial sway,
Was her own fortune, fate, and guardian deity.
She built the all-shadowing fabric of her empire
On the strong pillars of her public virtues,
And reign'd because she was most fit to reign.
But ours, Olybius, is no earthly kingdom,
We offer not a sceptre, that proclaims
Man mightier than his brethren of the dust;
No crown that with the lofty head that wears it
Must make its mouldering pillow in the grave.

This earth disowns our glories: but when Rome
Hath sepulchred the last of all her sons,
When Desolation walks her voiceless streets,
Ay, when this world, and all its lords and slaves,
Are swept into the ghastly gulf of ruin;
High in immortal grandeur, like the stars,
But brighter and more lasting, shall our souls
Sit in their empyrean thrones, endiadem'd
With amaranthine light. Such gifts our God
Hath promised to his faithful.

OLYBIUS.

Bounteous God!
That, as an earnest of your glory, leaves you
For every spurning foot to trample on,
To feed unstruggling the fierce beast of rapine,
To stand with open and untented wounds
Beneath the scorching sun! Where sleep the bolts
Of your Almighty, when we hale you forth
To glut the fire, or make a spectacle
Of your dread sufferings to the applauding people?

DIODOTUS.

Our God and Saviour gives us what we pray for;
On earth a portion of his bitter cup
To purify the world from our gross souls,
And disencumber us for heaven.

CHARINUS.

Diodotus!
Why stand'st thou thus, and dalliest with this man?

Hear me, I say, proud Pilate! on thy throne
Of judgment we defy thee,—loose thy hell-hounds!

OLYBIUS.

I'll hear no more—Away with them!—we'll glut
Their mad desires with suffering!
Ha, what's here?

THE ABOVE, SHEPHERD, GUARDS, &c., WITH A VEILED MAIDEN.

OLYBIUS.

Why drag ye forth that maid, who by her fillet
And flowing robes should seem a virgin, chosen
For Phœbus' service?

SHEPHERD.

Hear us, great Olybius.
There is a cave beside Orontes' stream
Roof'd with the dropping crystal, and the ivy
And woodbine trail their tendrils o'er its porch
As to conceal its secret chamber. There,
'Tis said, the Naiads, after cool disport
In the fresh waters, carelessly recline
Their dripping limbs upon the fragrant moss;
And when the light winds lift the verdant veil,
Some have beheld the unearthly loveliness
That slept within; and some have heard at noon
Bewitching sounds, that made the sultry air
Delicious. We, with venturous foot profane,
At that nymph-hallow'd hour had wander'd thither,

When, horror struck, we heard two murmuring voices;
One of a man, and of a maiden one,
Pouring upon the still and shudd'ring air
Their hymn to Christ—we seized and bore them hither.

OLYBIUS.

Ha! rend they then the dedicated maids
Even from our altars?—Haste, withdraw the veil
In which her guilty face is shrouded close—
—Their magic mocks my sight—I seem to see
What cannot be before me—Margarita!
Answer, if thou art she.

CALLIAS.

Great Judge! great Prefect!
It is my child—Apollo's gifted priestess!
Within that holy and oracular cave
Her spirit quaffs th' absorbing inspiration.
Lo, with what cold and wandering gaze she looks
On me, her sire—it chokes her voice—these men,
These wicked, false, blaspheming men, have leagued
To swear away her life.

OLYBIUS.

Callias, stand back.
Speak, virgin: wherefore wert thou there? with whom?

CALLIAS.

Seal, Phœbus, seal her lips in mercy.

OLYBIUS.

Peace!

MARGARITA.

I went to meet the minister of Christ,
And pray——

OLYBIUS.

Now where is he? by all the Gods
I'll rend asunder his white youthful limbs;
I'll set his head, with all its golden locks,
Upon the city gate, for each that passes
To shed his loathsome contumely upon it—
I'll——Now by heaven, she smiles!—Apostate!——still
I cannot hate her. (*Apart.*)
Priestess of Apollo,
Advance, and lend thy private ear. Fond maid,
Is't for some lov'd and favour'd youth thou'rt changed?
Renounce thy frantic faith, and live for him;
For him, and not for me.

MARGARITA.

Oh, generous Prefect!
I do beseech thee, for thy soul's sake, shed not
The innocent blood; for him that I have loved—
Behold him here.

GUARDS, WITH FABIUS.

GUARD.

The second criminal!

FABIUS.

Thou'rt here before me, daughter;—may thy path
To heaven precede me thus.

MARGARITA.

Amen! Amen!

OLYBIUS.

He!—he! that man with thin and hoary hair,
Bow'd down, and feebly borne on tottering limbs!
Ye Gods—ye Gods, I thank you!

CALLIAS.

Wizard! Sorcerer!
What hast thou done to witch my child from me?
What potent herbs dug at the full of the moon,
What foul Thessalian charms dost bear about thee?
Hast thou made league with Hecate, or wrung
From the unwilling dead the accursed secret
That gives thee power o'er human souls?

FABIUS.

Thou'st err'd
Into a truth: the dead hath risen, and walk'd
The unconscious earth; and what he taught, I teach.

CALLIAS.

Away with him!—he doth confess—away!

OLYBIUS.

Off with him to the torturers!

FABIUS.

Hear me, Prefect;
Hear me, I charge thee by the eternal God,
Him whom thou know'st not, yet whose name o'erawes thee;
Nor think ye that I speak to sue for mercy

Upon these children or myself: expend
Your subtlest tortures, nought can ye inflict
But what we are proud to suffer. For yourselves
I speak, in mercy to your forfeit souls.
God—at whose word the vast creation sprang,
Exulting in its light and harmony,
From the blank silence of the void abyss;
At whose command at once the unpeopled world
Brake out in life, and man, the lord of all,
Walk'd that pure Paradise, from which his sin
Expell'd him—God, that to the elder world
Spake with the avenging voice of rolling waters,
When the wide deluge swept from all the earth
The giant-born—He that in thunder-peals
Held dreadful converse with his chosen people;
And made the portent-teeming elements,
And the rapt souls of Prophets, to proclaim
His will almighty—in our latter days
That God hath spoken by his Son. He came,
From the dark ages of the infant world
Foretold,—the Prophets' everlasting Burthen.
The Virgin bare the Son, the angelic hosts
Burst out in song—the Father from his clouds
Declared him. To his miracles of might
Consenting, Nature own'd her Lord. His power,
His sorrows, all his glory, all his shame,
His cross, his death, his broken tomb bare witness,
And the bright clouds that wrapt him to the Sire

Ascending. And again he comes, again,
But not as then, not clad in mortal flesh,
To live the life, or die the death of man:
Girt with his own omnipotence, his throne
The wreck of worlds; the glory of his presence
Lighting infinity: He comes to assume
Th' eternal Judgment Seat. Then thou and I,
Olybius, and thy armed satellites,
And these my meek and lowly followers;
Thou, that art there enthroned in purple robes,
The thrice-triumphant Lord of all our Asia,
And I, a nameless, weak, unknown old man,
That stand a helpless criminal before thee,
Shall meet once more. The earth shall cast us up,
The winds shall waft our thin and scatter'd ashes,
The ocean yield us up our drowned bones;
There shall we meet before the cloudy throne—
Before the face of him, whose awful brightness
Shall be the sun of that dread day, in which
The thousand thousands of the angelic hosts,
And all the souls of all mankind shall bask,
Waiting their doom eternal. Thou and I
Shall there give in the accompt of this day's process,
And Christ shall render each his due reward.
Now, sir, your sentence.

MARGARITA.

Merciful Jesus! melt
His spirit in its hardness.

MACER.

By our Gods,
The very soldiers lean their pallid cheeks
Upon their spears; and at his every pause
The panting of their long suppressed breath
Is audible.

VOPISCUS.

Methinks the stern Olybius
Is lost in mute admiring meditation.

OLYBIUS.

There needed not your taunt, sir, to awake
Olybius to his duty.

CHARINUS.

They demur,
And will defraud us of our glorious crowns.
Must we not scoff them back into their rage?
What, Heathens, shake ye at an old man's voice?
What will ye when the archangel trumpet thrills
Upon your souls?

FABIUS.

Charinus, if thou lov'st
Thy soul, be silent—pride must fall: the boastful
Denied his Lord, and thou——

CHARINUS.

I?——

OLYBIUS.

Drag them forth,
Some to the dungeons, to the torturers some,

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As we give order ;—and to-morrow morn,
Whoe'er adores not at Apollo's shrine
In Daphne, him the headsman's gleaming steel,
Or the fierce lions, or the flaming pile,
Shall cut away, as a corrupted branch
From flourishing Antioch.—Off with them, I say!

CHRISTIANS.

Hallelujah! Lord our God!
Now our earthly path is trod;
Pass'd are now our cares and fears,
And we quit this vale of tears.

Hallelujah! King of Kings!
Now our spirits spread their wings,
To the mansions of the blest,
To thy everlasting rest.

Hallelujah! Lord of Lords
Be our last and dying words,
Glory to our God above,
To our slaughterers peace and love.

The Prison.

MARGARITA.

I'm safe at last: the wild and furious cries
That drove me on are dying into silence.

These cold and damp and gloomy prison walls
Are my protection. And few hours ago
My presence would have made an holiday
In Antioch. As I've moved along the streets,
I've heard the mother chide her sportive child
For breaking the admiring stillness round me.
There was no work so precious or so dear
But they deserted it to gaze on me.
And now they bay'd at me, like angry dogs:
And every brow was wrinkled, every hand
Clench'd in fierce menace: from their robes they shook
The dust upon me, even more loathsome scorn
Was cast upon my path. And can it be,
Oh Christ! that I, whose tainted hands so late
Served at the idol's altar; on whose lips
And lyre still ring the idol's votive hymns,
Am chosen to bear thy cross, and wear on high
The martyr's robes enwoven of golden light?

CALLIAS, MARGARITA.

MARGARITA.

Alas! my father!

CALLIAS.

Oh my child! my child!
Once more I find thee. Even the savage men,
That stand with rods and axes round the gate,
Had reverence for grey hairs: they let me pass,

And with rude pity bless'd me—Thou alone
Art cold and tearless in thy father's sorrows.

MARGARITA.

Oh say not so!

CALLIAS.

And wilt thou touch me, then,
Polluted, as thy jealous sect proclaims,
By idols? Oh, ye unrelenting Gods!
More unrelenting daughter, not content
To make me wretched by depriving me
Of my soul's treasure, do ye envy me
The miserable solace of her tears
Mingling with mine? She quits the world, and me,
Rejoicing——

MARGARITA.

No!

CALLIAS.

And I, whose blameless pride
Dwelt on her—even as all the lands', no more.
The sculptor wrought his Goddess by her form,
Her likeness was the stamp of its divinity.
And when I walk'd in Antioch, all men hail'd
The father of the beauteous Margarita,
And now they'll fret me with their cold compassion
Upon the childless, desolate——

MARGARITA.

My father,
I could have better borne thy wrath, thy curse.

CALLIAS.

Alas! I am too wretched to feel wrath:
There is no violence in a broken spirit.
Well, I've not long to live: it matters not
Whether the old man go henceforth alone.
And if his limbs should fail him, he may seize
On some cold pillar, or some lintel post,
For that support which human hands refuse him;
Or he must hire some slave, with face and voice
Dissonant and strange; or——

MARGARITA.

Gracious Lord, have mercy!
For what to this to-morrow's scourge or stake?

CALLIAS.

And he must sit the livelong day alone
In silence, in the Temple Porch. No lyre,
Or one by harsh and jarring fingers touch'd,
For that which all around distill'd a calm
More sweet than slumber. Unfamiliar hands
Must strew his pillow, and his weary eyes
By unfamiliar hands be closed at length
For their long sleep.

MARGARITA.

Alas! alas! my father,
Why do they rend me from thee, for what crime?
I am a Christian: will a Christian's hands
With tardier zeal perform a daughter's duty?
A Christian's heart with colder fondness tend

An aged father? What forbids me still
To lead thy feeble steps, where the warm sun
Quickens thy chill and languid blood; or where
Some shadow soothes the noontide's burning heat;
To watch thy wants, to steal about thy chamber
With foot so light, as to invite the sleep
To shed its balm upon thy lids? Dear sir,
Our faith commands us even to love our foes—
Can it forbid to love a father?

CALLIAS.

Prove it,
And for thy father's love forswear this faith.

MARGARITA.

Forswear it?

CALLIAS.

Or dissemble; any thing
But die and leave me.

MARGARITA.

Who disown their Lord
On earth, will he disown in heaven.

CALLIAS.

Hard heart!
Credulous of all but thy fond father's sorrows,
Thou wilt believe each wild and monstrous tale
Of this fond faith.

MARGARITA.

I dare not disbelieve
What the dark grave hath cast the buried forth
To utter: to whose visible form on earth

After the cross, expiring men have written
Their witness in their blood.

CALLIAS.

Whence learnt thou this?
Tell me, my child; for sorrow's weariness
Is now so heavy on me, I can listen
Nor rave. Come, sit we down on this coarse straw,
Thy only couch—thine, that wert wont to lie
On the soft plumage of the swan, that shamed not
Thy spotless limbs—Come.

MARGARITA.

Dost thou not remember
When Decius was the Emperor, how he came
To Antioch, and when holy Babylas
Withstood his entrance to the Christian church,
Frantic with wrath, he bade them drag him forth
To cruel death? Serene the old man walk'd
The crowded streets; at every pause the yell
Of the mad people made, his voice was heard
Blessing God's bounty, or imploring pardon
Upon the barbarous hosts that smote him on.
Then didst thou hold me up, a laughing child,
To gaze on that sad spectacle. He pass'd,
And look'd on me with such a gentle sorrow;
The pallid patience of his brow toward me
Seem'd softening to a smile of deepest love.
When all around me mock'd, and howl'd, and laugh'd,
God gave me grace to weep. In after time

That face would on my noontide dreams return;
And in the silence of the night I heard
The murmur of that voice remote, and touch'd
To an aerial sweetness, like soft music
Over a tract of waters. My young soul
Lay wrapt in wonder, how that meek old man
Could suffer with such unrepining calmness;
Till late I learnt the faith for which he suffer'd,
And wonder'd then no more. Thou'rt weeping, too—
Oh Jesus, hast thou moved his heart?

CALLIAS.

Away!
Insatiate of thy father's misery,
Wouldst have the torturers wring the few chill drops
Of blood that linger in these wither'd veins?

MARGARITA.

I'd have thee with me in the changeless heavens,
Where we should part no more; reclined together
Far from the violence of this wretched world;
Emparadised in bliss, to which the Elysium
Dream'd by fond poets were a barren waste.

CALLIAS.

Would we were there, or anywhere but here,
Where the cold damps are oozing from the walls,
And the thick darkness presses like a weight
Upon the eyelids. Daughter, when thou served'st
Thy fathers' Gods, thou wert not thus: the sun
Was brightest where thou wert—beneath thy feet

Flowers grew. Thou sat'st like some unclouded star,
Ensphered in thine own light and joy, and mad'st
The world around thee beauteous; now, cold earth
Must be thy couch to-night, to-morrow morn——
——What means that music?—Oh, I used to love
Those evening harpings once, my child!

MARGARITA.

I hear
The maids; beneath the twilight they are thronging
To Daphne, and they carol as they pass.

CALLIAS.

Thou canst not go.

MARGARITA.

Lament not that, my father.

CALLIAS.

Thou must breathe here the damp and stifling air.

MARGARITA.

Nay, listen not.

CALLIAS.

They call us hence.—Ah me,
My gentle child, in vain wouldst thou distract
My rapt attention from each well-known note,
Once hallow'd to mine ear by thine own voice,
Which erst made Antioch vacant, drawing after thee
The thronging youth, which cluster'd all around thee
Like bees around their queen, the happiest they
That were the nearest. Oh, my child! my child!
Thou canst not yet be blotted from their memory.

And I'll go forth, and kneel at every foot,
To the stern Prefect show my hoary hair,
And sue for mercy on myself, not thee.

MARGARITA.

Go not, my father.

CALLIAS.

Cling not round me thus;
There, there, even there repose upon the straw.
Nay, let me go, or I'll——but I've no power,
Thou heed'st not now my anger or my love;
So, so farewell, then, and our Gods or thine,
Or all that have the power to bless, be with thee!

[*Departs.*

EVENING SONGS OF THE MAIDENS.

(*Heard at a distance*).

I.

Come away, with willing feet
Quit the close and breathless street:
Sultry court and chamber leave,
Come and taste the balmy eve,
Where the grass is cool and green,
And the verdant laurels screen
All whose timid footsteps move
With the quickening stealth of love;
Where Orontes' waters hold
Mirrors to your locks of gold,

And the sacred Daphne weaves
Canopies of trembling leaves.

II.

Come away, the heavens above
Just have light enough for love;
And the crystal Hesperus
Lights his dew-fed lamp for us.
Come, the wider shades are falling,
And the amorous birds are calling
Each his wandering mate to rest
In the close and downy nest.
And the snowy orange flowers,
And the creeping jasmine bowers,
From their swinging censers cast
Their richest odours, and their last.

III.

Come, the busy day is o'er,
Flying spindle gleams no more;
Wait not till the twilight gloom
Darken o'er th' embroider'd loom.
Leave the toilsome task undone,
Leave the golden web unspun.
Hark, along the humming air
Home the laden bees repair;
And the bright and dashing rill
From the side of every hill,

With a clearer, deeper sound,
Cools the freshening air around.

IV.

Come, for though our God the Sun
Now his fiery course hath run;
There the western waves among
Lingers not his glory long;
There the couch awaits him still,
Wrought by Jove-born Vulcan's skill
Of the thrice-refined gold,
With its wings that wide unfold,
O'er the surface of the deep
To waft the bright-hair'd God asleep
From the Hesperian islands blest,
From the rich and purple West,
To where the swarthy Indians lave
In the farthest Eastern wave.

V.

There the Morn on tiptoe stands,
Holding in her rosy hands
All the amber-studded reins
Of the steeds with fiery manes,
For the sky-borne charioteer
To start upon his new career.
Come, for when his glories break
Every sleeping maid must wake.
Brief be then our stolen hour
In the fragrant Daphne's bower;

Brief our twilight dance must be
Underneath the cypress tree.
Come away, nor more delay,
Youth and maiden, come away*.

Night.—A splendid, illuminated Palace.

MARGARITA.

Am I brought here to die? My prison open'd
Softly as to an angel's touch, and hither
Was I led forth among the breathing lutes
Of our blithe maidens, as to lure me on.
And still where'er I move, as from the earth,
Or floating in the calm embosoming air,
Sweet sounds of music seem to follow me.
I breathe as 'twere an atmosphere distill'd
From richest flowers; and, lest the unwonted light

* Page 183, stanzas 4 and 5, from a beautiful fragment of Mimnermus. Poet. Min. Græci. Edit. Gaisford. Vol. i. page 423.

Ἠέλιος μὲν γὰρ ἔλαχεν πόνον ἤματα πάντα,
Οὐδέ ποτ' ἀμπαυσις γίγνεται οὐδεμία
Ἵπποισίν τε καὶ αὐτῷ, ἐπὴν ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠὼς
ὠκεανὸν προλιποῦσ'· οὐρανὸν εἰσαναβῇ·
τὸν μὲν γὰρ διὰ κῦμα φέρει πολυήρατος εὐνὴ
κοίλη, Ἡφαίστου χερσὶν ἐληλαμένη
χρυσοῦ τιμηέντος, ὑπόπτερος, ἄκρον ἐφ' ὕδωρ,
εὖδονθ' ἁρπαλέως, χώρου ἀφ' Ἑσπερίδων,
γαῖαν ἐς Αἰθιόπων· ἵνα οἱ θοὸν ἅρμα καὶ Ἵπποι
ἑστᾶσ', ὄφρ' Ἠὼς ἠριγένεια μόλῃ·
ἔνθ' ἐπέβη ἑτέρων ὀχέων Ὑπερίονος υἱὸς——

Offend mine eyes, so late released from gloom,
'Tis soothed and cool'd in alabaster lamps.
And is it thus ye would enamour me
Of this sad world? Your luxuries, your pomps,
Your vaulted ceilings, that with fond delay
Prolong the harp's expiring sweetness; walls
Where the bright paintings breathe and speak, and chambers
Where all would soothe to sleep, but that to sleep
Were to suspend the sense of their soft pleasures;
They are wasted all on me: as though I trode
The parching desert, still my spirit longs
To spread its weary wings, and be at rest.
Oh, vainly thus would ye enhance my loss,
By gilding thus the transient life I lose!
Were mine affections dead to all things earthly
As to these idle flatteries of the sense,
My trial were but light.
There's some one comes—
Is it the ruthless executioner?

OLYBIUS, MARGARITA.

OLYBIUS.

Fairest, it is——

MARGARITA.

Lord Prefect, it becomes
The dying Christian to be mock'd in death;

But it becomes not great Olybius
To play the mocker.

OLYBIUS.

Mock thee! I had rather
Fall down and worship at thy feet.

MARGARITA.

My Lord,
I said before, thou dost not well to heap
Cold insult on the head thou tramplest on.
If that mine hour is come, command thy slaves
To lead me forth.

OLYBIUS.

I will—but they shall wear
The bridal saffron; all their locks shall bloom
With garlands; and their blazing nuptial torches,
And hymeneal songs, prepare the way
Before Love's blushing martyr.

MARGARITA.

Sir, go on;
I can endure even this.

OLYBIUS.

Sweet Margarita,
Give me thine hand—for once—Oh! snowy treasure,
That shall be mine thus fondly clasp'd for ever.
Now, Margarita, cast thine eyes below—
What seest thou?

MARGARITA.

Here Apollo's temple rests

Its weight upon its snow-white columns. There
The massy shades of Daphne, with its streams,
That with their babbling sounds allure the sight,
Where their long dim-seen tracts of silvery whiteness
Now gleam, and now are lost again. Beyond,
The star-lit city in its wide repose;
Each tall and silent tower in stately darkness
Distinct against the cloudless sky.

OLYBIUS.

Beneath thee,
Now, to the left?

MARGARITA.

A dim and narrow court
I see, where shadows as of hurrying men
Pass and repass; and now and then their lights
Wander on shapeless heaps, like funeral piles.
And there are things of strange distorted shape,
On which the torches cast a colder hue,
As though on iron instruments of torture.
A little farther, there are moving lamps
In the black amphitheatre, that glance,
And, as they glance, each narrow aperture
Is feebly gilded with their slanted light.
It is the quick and busy preparation
For the dark sacrifice of to-morrow.

OLYBIUS.

There,
If thou canst add the scorn, and shame, and pain,

The infuriate joy of the fierce multitude,
The flowing blood, and limbs that writhe in flame,
Thou seest what thou preparest for thyself.
Now what Olybius' love prepares for thee,
Fairest, behold!—This high irradiate roof
Fretted with lamps; these gorgeous chambers, each
As it recedes of costlier splendor, strew'd
With all the barbarous Indian's loom hath wrought,
Or all the enslaved ocean wafts to Tyre.
Arabia's weeping groves are odourless,
Her balmy wealth exhausted o'er our couches
Of banquet, where the revelling Syria spreads
Her fruits and wines in vases cool with snow
From Libanus. Around are summer gardens
Of sunny lawn and sweet secluded shade,
Which waft into the gilded casement airs
Loaded with dewy fragrance, and send up
The coolness of their silver-dashing fountains,
As Nature's self strove in fond rivalry
With Art to pamper every sense. Behold
Yon throne, whereon the Asiarch holds his state,
Circled with kings and more than kingly Romans;
There by his side shall Margarita sit,
Olybius' bride; with all the adoring city,
And every province of the sumptuous East,
Casting its lavish homage at her feet;
Her life one luxury of love, her state
One scene of peerless pomp and pride; her will

The law of spacious kingdoms, and her lord
More glorious for the beauty of his bride
Than for three triumphs. Now, my soul's beloved,
Make thou thy choice.

MARGARITA.

'Tis made—the funeral pyre.

OLYBIUS.

Dearest, what say'st thou? Wouldst thou have me woo thee
So that the burning blushes should——

MARGARITA.

Oh! hear me,
Olybius—Should we look to-morrow eve
On that sad court of death, the winds that bore
The groans of anguish will have died in silence;
The untainted earth have drunk the blood, nor trace
Remain of all those Christian multitudes,
Save some small urns of dust. A few years pass'd,
Could we look round where stands this spacious palace,
Yon throne of gold, these high and arching roofs,
Even on thine own majestic shape, Olybius,
Will the distinguish'd dust of these proud chambers,
Or even thine own embalmed ashes, wear
The stamp and impress of their kingly lord?
With the same scorn will the coarse peasant's foot
Tread all beneath it. But the soul—the soul,
What then will be its separate doom? What seats
Of light and bliss will hold to-morrow's victims!

On what dark beds shall those recline, who have shone
A little longer in this cloudy sphere,
And bask'd within the blaze of human glory,
Ere yet the eternal night hath gather'd them
In darkness!—Oh! were this world all, Olybius,
With joy would I become thy cupbearer,
And minister the richest wine of life,
Long as thy mortal lips could quaff of bliss.
But now a nobler service doth become me;
I'll use thy fabling poet's phrase, and be
Thy Hebe, with officious hand to reach thee
The ambrosial cup of everlasting gladness.

OLYBIUS.

How doth the rapture of her speech enkindle
The brightness of her beauty! never yet
Look'd she so lovely, when her loosen'd locks
Flow'd in the frantic grace of inspiration
From the burst fillet down her snowy neck.

MARGARITA.

Roman, I know thy spirit pants for glory;
There is a thirst within thine inmost soul,
Which triumphs cannot satiate, nor the sway
Of earth. I'll tell thee how to win a record
That shall be register'd by flaming hands
In the adamantine heavens.

OLYBIUS.

But canst thou win me
An immortality of thee?

MARGARITA.

I can.

OLYBIUS.

Name then the price, be it the forfeit life
Of the most hardy in yon Christian crew,
'Tis given.

MARGARITA.

I ask thine own eternal soul—
Believe in Jesus Christ, and I am thine.
——Thou smil'st on me as with a scornful pity;
I may not scorn, but from my inmost soul
I pity thee. These tears, these bursting tears,
Flow but for thee, Olybius! Little know'st thou
What sacrifice it were t' abandon now
The saintly quiet of the unwedded state;
Where all the undistracted spirit dwells
On heaven alone; nor love, nor hope, nor duty,
Nor daily thought, nor nightly dream withdrawn
From him, who is the sun to that pale flower
The virgin's heart. Those silent stars above us
Are not so pure, so calm, so far removed
From earth, as maidens dedicate to Christ;
And I would quit that cloudless course on high
To wander in the darkling world with thee.

OLYBIUS.

There was a time, I will not say thy lips,
But thy full sparkling eye spake softer language;
Then——

MARGARITA.

Oh! reproach me not my days of shame.
I will not say I loved thee not, Olybius,
With a most fond and earthly love. In truth,
Or ere I learnt this unimpassion'd faith,
Thou wert my soul's idolatry—thy form
Usurp'd Apollo's pedestal, diverting
All to thyself, mine incense and my vows.
Thou wert mine all on earth, nor knew I aught
Beyond to rival thee. Olybius, gaze not
In wonder thus; learn thou this faith, and then
Thy bride will bring to thee a nobler dowry
Than her poor beauty. Thou wouldst bless me, then,
Nor chide me as an alien to thy love.
Or should a darker destiny await us,
If, ere the twilight hour that gave me to thee,
We were led forth to die; if funeral fires
Were all our bridal lights, our bridal couch
The rack, and scorn our hymeneal song,
Thou wouldst turn to me in thine agony,
In full and unrepining fondness turn,
And bless me still, while thou hadst breath for blessing!
Nay, turn not from me.

OLYBIUS.

Curse upon this faith,
That thus hath wrung the love from thy pure soul!
Curse on thy——

MARGARITA.

Ha! thou shalt not curse the Saviour.
Alas! and there's no hope—he 's lost—he 's lost—
So now farewell for ever, proud Olybius!
Henceforth our way along this world of woe
Must be far separate to our separate graves,
And separate too our everlasting dwellings—
Though my voice fail, I'll weep a last farewell!

OLYBIUS.

Now whither goest thou?

MARGARITA.

To my prison, sir.

OLYBIUS.

Ay, and thou shalt. But hast thou thought, fond maid,
To what my wrath may doom thee? Will those limbs,
Wont once to tremble at the zephyr's breath,
That lightly disarranged thy bashful robes—
Thou, that didst blush, like morning, when the eyes
Of men beheld thy half-veil'd face—wilt thou
Endure thy unrobed loveliness to be
The public gaze?

MARGARITA.

Will great Olybius take
Such poor revenge?

OLYBIUS.

By heaven! but I must leave her,
Or she will tempt me to unmanly violence,
Or melt within me all my Roman virtue.

By all the Gods! I'll find a way to tame
This wayward fawn.—So, since thou wilt, proud woman,
Return to solitude and gloom, to-morrow
Thou wakest to the bridal or to death!

MARGARITA.

He's gone—how suddenly!—and still I hoped,
And surely 'twas no sin to hope so fondly,
That He, who made the proud rebellious waves
Of the vex'd sea in smooth obedient calmness
Sink down, might yet rebuke his haughty spirit.

CALLIAS, MARGARITA.

CALLIAS.

Queen of the East! thy father doth thee homage.
The Egyptian that quaff'd off the liquid pearl,
That changed her beauty's slaves but as the world
Its lords, shall pass into the oblivious Lethe,
And my bright daughter be henceforth the proverb
Of loveliness——

MARGARITA.

What mean'st thou?

CALLIAS.

And Orontes
Shall put to shame pale Cydnus, when thou sailest
In gilded galley down the obsequious tide,
The air all music, and the heavens all brightness;
And all the shores alive with Antioch's sons,
Yea, those of utmost Asia, that shall bear

The thought of thee, like precious merchandize,
Back to their homes, henceforward held in honor
For having gazed on queenly Margarita.

MARGARITA.

Ah! how to check this frantic rapture?

CALLIAS.

She,
The haughty mistress of the Palmy City,
Whom great Aurelian and the arms of Rome
Scarce bow'd, no more shall fill Fame's brazen trump,
That shall devote alone to Margarita
The fulness of its sound.

MARGARITA.

Why so, sir?

CALLIAS.

Why?
Doth not Olybius, great Olybius,
The Emperor's second self, the Lord of Asia,
Whose triumphs gild our late degenerate days
With splendor worthy elder Rome! whose form
Were fittest by imperial Juno's side
To walk the clouds, her chosen mate; to lacquey
Whose royal state barbaric monarchs vie—
Hath he not deign'd to call thee bride?

MARGARITA.

My father,
Thou know'st the way I'm going, and canst lead me.

CALLIAS.

Whither, my child? Are not these chambers thine,

That with their splendor load my unwonted eyes?
Are not the banquet and the couch of rest
Prepared?

MARGARITA.

They are;—the prisoner's bitter bread,
And earth-strewn couch.

CALLIAS.

Hath he deceived me, then?

MARGARITA.

No; thou'st deceived thyself.

CALLIAS.

What! and to-morrow
No bridal pomp, no hymenean song?

MARGARITA.

Oh yes, my father, I shall wed to-morrow,
But with no earthly bridegroom; songs there will be,
But of this sinful world unheard.

CALLIAS.

Thou mean'st not
That thou shalt die?

MARGARITA.

I shall begin to live
To-morrow—Father, I would have thee with me,
That I may say, Adieu——

CALLIAS.

Liars and murderers!
Did they not tell me, with a flattering smoothness
Of voice, like spaniels fawning at my feet,

That they were leading thee to be their queen,
Olybius' bride? And will they cast thee back
Into the loathsome dungeon, to come forth
And bow this neck, this soft and ivory neck,
To the fierce headsman?

MARGARITA.

It was truth they spake.

CALLIAS.

Well, then!—Ah, now 'tis clear—'tis age hath crazed me.
And made this dim confusion in my brain,
And hence such strange things seem to be, and are not.
Come, I'll go with thee where thou wilt; I know
Old doting age should be obedient. Thou
Wilt tell me what this hurrying alternation
Of light and gloom, and palaces and prisons,
Of nuptials and of murders, means:—in truth,
I do begin to hope it is a dream.
Life's dying flame, they say, like waning lamps,
Casts oft unreal shadows, that perplex
The parting soul—But this is certain; yet
I have not lost thee, for I feel thine hand
Trembling and warm in my cold palm. Go on,
But hold me thus, I'll follow thee for ever.

Another Chamber.

OLYBIUS.

Put out those dazzling lights, nor weary me
With that incessant music.

Cruel Fates!
Have ye thus pamper'd my insatiate soul,
Preventing all my wishes by fulfilment;
And led me step by step unto the Capitol
Of man's felicity, to laugh me there
To scorn, by setting up a golden crown
Of all my toils, that withers in my grasp?
Th' inured to misery are inured to suffering;
But he on whom Success hath ever waited,
The thunder-bearing eagle of his war,
In peace his busy minister of pleasure,
To him the thought of one thing unpossess'd
Casts back a gloomy shadow, that o'erclouds
All his pass'd tract of glory and of bliss.
Oh! that the barren earth had borne to me
But shame and sorrow's bitter fruits.
But I,
That boasted in my single soul to centre
The rigid virtues of old Rome, myself
The nobler Scipio of a looser age,
Am I thus sunk? There were in elder days
Who from the bottom of their hearts have pluck'd
Rooted affection, and have proudly worn
Their lives, thus self-despoil'd of their best treasures—
Fathers have led their gallant sons to th' axe——
Oh! but to doom that neck, round which I thought
Mine arms should grow, upon the block;—that face,
Which oft my dreams presented me composed

In loving rest upon my slumbering bosom,
Convulsed!——The heavens and earth shall fall together
Ere this shall be!—But how to save her—how—
And must Olybius stoop to means beyond
His own high will?
This pale and false Vopiscus
Hath from great Probus wrung his easy mandate:
Him Asia owns her Prefect, if Olybius
Obey not this fell edict.——I must plunge
The world in civil strife, uplift the banner
Of arm'd rebellion 'gainst mine Emperor,
The father of my fortunes—trample down
My solemn oaths sworn to th' assembled people——
What then?—howl war, and to the dust my glory.
Shall it be so?——Who comes?—Vopiscus!

OLYBIUS, VOPISCUS, MACER, ROMANS.

VOPISCUS.

See,.
My friends, that empire's weight is no light burthen:
The nightly sleep may seal the vulgar eye;
The public weal denies to great Olybius
That base plebeian blessing.

OLYBIUS.

Is the night
So nearly pass'd?

VOPISCUS.

The purple dawn begins
To tip with light the misty eastern hills.

MACER.

Already doth the wakeful people throng
In gay and holiday attire; even now
I heard the clamour of the baser sort,
In merry conflict for their foremost seats
In the Amphitheatre, and round the piles
On which the Christians are to burn.

VOPISCUS.

'Tis time,
Great Prefect, that we too prepare. Olybius
Were doubtless loth to check the people's zeal,
That shout for death on every Christian head.

OLYBIUS.

When I am bow'd beneath thy rule, mine acts
Shall render their accompt to thee.

MACER.

Olybius,
Beseech thee hear me these few words apart.
Whom thou wouldst save, I know, nor speak of it
But in officious love—But, on thy life,
I pray thee.

OLYBIUS.

On my life!

MACER.

This night I have heard
Along the streets and in the noisy taverns,
All Antioch, madden'd by the angry priests,
Even thine own soldiers, swear to glut their eyes

With the apostate maiden's blood. Shouldst thou,
All loved and fear'd and honour'd as thou art,
Outspread thy purple mantle over her,
They'll pluck her thence, and rend her limb from limb.

OLYBIUS.

What! dare the rabble menace him whose wrath
The royal Parthian fled?

MACER.

But yield thus far—
Let her be led forth with the rest; to me
Entrust the order that she suffer last.
My life upon't she yields; the soul of woman
Fears not in thought the anguish, which, if seen,
Appals her back into her nature's softness;
They can defy the pain they cannot gaze on.

OLYBIUS.

Excellent! excellent! my noblest friend,
To thee I trust my more than life.
Lead on;
Ere one hour pass we meet before the temple.
Away!

VOPISCUS.

'Tis time.

OLYBIUS.

Thou, Macer, stay with me.
To each and all, till morn hath broken, farewell!

The Prison.

MARGARITA.

Oh Lord! thou oft hast sent thy plumed angels,
And with their silent presence they have awed
The Heathen's violence to a placid peace.
The ravening beasts have laid their fawning heads
In love upon the lap of him, whom man
Had cast them for their prey: and fires have burn'd,
Unharming, like the glory of a star,
Round the pale brows of maidens; and the chains
Have dropt, like wither'd flax, from galled limbs;
And whom the infuriate people led to death,
They have fallen down, and worshipp'd as a deity.
But thou hast sent a kindlier boon to me,
A soft prophetic peace, that soothes my soul,
Like music, to an heavenly harmony.
For in my slumber a bright being came,
And with faint steps my father followed him,
Up through the argent fields, and there we met
And felt the joy of tears without the pain.
What 's here? the bridal vestments, and the veil
Of saffron, and the garland flowers. Olybius,
Dost think to tempt me now, when all my thoughts
Like the soft dews of evening, are drawn up
To heaven, but not to fall and taint themselves
With earth again? My inmost soul last night
Was wrung to think of our eternal parting;

But now my voice may tremble, while I say,
"God's will be done!" yet I have strength to say it.
But thou, oh morn! the last that e'er shall dawn
Through earthly mists on my sad eyes—Oh blue,
And beautiful even here, and fragrant morn,
Mother of gentle airs and blushing hues!
That bearest, too, in thy fair hand the key
To which the harmonious gates of Paradise
Unfold;—bright opening of immortal day,
That ne'er shalt know a setting, but shalt shine
Round me for ever on the crystal floors
Where Blessed Spirits tread. My bridal morn,
In which my soul is wedded to its Lord,
I may not hail thee in a mourner's garb:
Mine earthly limbs shall wear their nuptial robes,
And my locks bloom once more with flowers that fade.
But I must haste, I hear the trumpet's voice;
Acclaiming thousands answer—yet I fear not.
Oh Lord! support me, and I shall not fear.
But hark! the maidens are abroad, to hail
Their God; we answer through our prison grates.
Hark!

CHORUS OF HEATHEN MAIDENS.

Now glory to the God, who breaks,
The monarch of the realms on high;
And with his trampling chariot shakes
The azure pavement of the sky.

The steeds, for human eyes too bright,
Before the yoke of chrysolite
Pant, while he springs upon his way,
The beardless youth divine, who bathes the world in day.

CHORUS OF CHRISTIANS (*from the prison*).

Now glory to the God, whose throne,
Far from this world obscure and dim,
Holds its eternal state alone,
Beyond the flight of Seraphim:
The God, whose one omnific word
Yon orb of flame obedient heard,
And from the abyss in fulness sprang,
While all the blazing heavens with shouts of triumph rang.

HEATHENS.

Now glory to the God, that still
Through the pale Signs his car hath roll'd,
Nor aught but his imperious will
E'er those rebellious steeds controll'd.
Nor ever from the birth of time
Ceased he from forth the Eastern clime,
Heaven's loftiest steep his way to make
To where his flaming wheels the Hesperian waters slake.

CHRISTIANS.

Now glory to the God, that laid
His mandate on yon king of day;
The master-call the Sun obey'd,
And forced his headlong steeds to stay,

To pour a long unbroken noon
O'er the red vale of Ajalon:
By night uncheck'd, fierce Joshua's sword
A double harvest reap'd of vengeance for the Lord.

HEATHENS.

Now glory to the God, whose blaze
The scatter'd hosts of darkness fly;
The stars before his conquering rays
Yield the dominion of the sky;
Nor e'er doth ancient Night presume
Her gloomy state to re-assume;
While he the wide world rules alone,
And high o'er men and Gods drives on his fire-wheel'd throne.

CHRISTIANS.

Now glory to the Lord, whose Cross
Consenting Nature shrinking saw;
Mourning the dark world's heavier loss,
The conscious Sun in silent awe
Withdrew into the depths of gloom;
The horror of that awful doom
Quench'd for three hours the noontide light,
And wrapt the guilt-shak'n earth in deep untimely night.

HEATHENS.

Now glory to the God, that wakes
With vengeance in his fiery speed,

To wreak his wrath impatient breaks
On every guilty godless head;
Hasty he mounts his early road,
And pours his brightest beams abroad:
And looks down fierce with jocund light
To see his fane avenged, his vindicated rite.

CHRISTIANS.

Now glory to the Christ, whose love
Even now prepares our seats of rest,
And in his golden courts above
Enrolls us 'mid his chosen Blest;
Even now our martyr robes of light
Are weaving of heaven's purest white;
And we, before thy course is done,
Shall shine more bright than thou, O vainly-worshipp'd Sun!

The Front of the Temple.

On one hand the Prefect's Palace, on the other the Amphitheatre.

MANY CITIZENS.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Didst e'er behold a spectacle so rich
And sumptuous? How yon strong Centurion
With all his band are labouring to advance
Toward the temple; like to rolling rivers
The people flood around them. Lords and slaves,

Gown'd senators, and artisans in doublets,
Mothers with infants, and old tottering men,
All reverence lost for state or rank or age,
Swell the vast uproar.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Antioch doth not hold
Such multitudes; all Syria hath pour'd in,
Choking the roads with tumult.

THIRD CITIZEN.

I beheld
The Amphitheatre, its spacious circle,
From the arena to the highest seat,
One mass of living turbulence.

FIRST CITIZEN.

No wonder;
For him who lingered in the city all
Assail'd as they pass'd by with imprecation,
And hurl'd huge stones at his devoted head,
Deeming him guilty of this faith accursed.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

On every tree they hang like birds; the courts
Around the Prefect's palace are as throng'd
As here before the temple. But for that
Beyond, wherein the executioners
Stand with bare arms around their dreadful engines,
Men struggle for the entrance as for life;
He that hath won it looks back on his comrade
More proud than if he had storm'd an enemy's camp.

FIRST CITIZEN.

How noble is this rage! Like one wild fire
The zeal of vengeance for their fathers' Gods
Wraps all these myriads.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

Ay, those stormy clouds,
To which these gather'd hosts may best be liken'd,
Are pregnant with the thunderbolts of heaven.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Thought ye all Antioch still so sound?

FOURTH CITIZEN.

I know not;
But this I know, 'twere ill for him who wore
A face of sorrow in an hour like this;
'Twere treason 'gainst the tyrant of the day—
The assembled people.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Back! fall back! the Prefect!

FOURTH CITIZEN.

Hark, friends! as now the brazen clarions cease,
How sweetly shrill the silver trumpets pierce
The eager ear. Again that general shout
From all that vast and boundless multitude!
It peals up all the Amphitheatre,
And every court takes up and multiplies
The exulting clamour, like the thunders rolling
Amid the rugged mountains.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Would not Jove
Almost exchange his high immortal state,
Where gods before his footstool bow, to win
The homage round the great Olybius pour'd?

FOURTH CITIZEN.

'Twere worth a life to be one hour as he is.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Behold the priests of all the temples bear
Their gods in state to see themselves avenged:
As they sweep on, the reverent crowd falls back.
Lo, first the loose-hair'd Bacchanals dance on
In wanton Thiasus, their cymbals catch
The radiant light, that falls in glancing flakes
O'er their white robes, and freshening ivy wreaths.
Lo, now the beardless youths of Dyndymene!
Half timorous, the yoked lions drag along
The golden car, where sits the tower-crown'd Queen.
Now the Egyptian timbrels ring the praise
Of Isis; and, behind, Jove's flamen walks
In state supreme, like his own god.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Fall down,
Ye men of Antioch! lo, your ancient Gods!
Astarte, diadem'd with her crescent moon,
And him whom by the side of Lebanon
The maidens yearly weep, soft Thammuz.

THIRD CITIZEN.

See!

The high-tiara'd Magian bears his fire.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

Oh, proud assemblage of Divinity!
Lo, all the earth's conspiring Gods in league!
The ruling powers of heaven and hell are met
T' exterminate this all-abhorred faith.

SECOND CITIZEN.

But think ye that Apollo's aged priest
Will come?

FIRST CITIZEN.

I have been gazing toward the vestibule
In anxious hope to see his reverend face.

SECOND CITIZEN.

What, know'st thou not how yesterday——

THIRD CITIZEN.

Peace, peace!

He's here—Give place.

THE ABOVE, CALLIAS.

CALLIAS.

All true, and real all:
My sleep is fled, but not my hideous dreams.
Ah! there they stand, their baskets full of flowers,
The censers trembling in their timid hands,
All, all the dedicated maids, but one.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Why doth he gaze around? he seems to seek
What he despairs of finding.

CALLIAS.

No, there's none
That taller than the rest draws all regards;
And if they touch their lyres, they will but wake,
With all their art, the memory of that voice
Which is not of their choir——

SECOND CITIZEN.

Ah, poor old man!

CALLIAS.

What! who art thou that dost presume to pity
The father of the peerless Margarita?
I tell thee, insolent! beside the stake
I shall be prouder of my single child
Than if my wife had teem'd like Niobe
With such as thine.

THIRD CITIZEN.

He hath no children, sir:

CALLIAS.

Would I were like him!—Ah, no—no,—my child!
I know that I'm come forth to see thee die
For this strange God thy father never worshipp'd;
Yet all my wrath is gone, and half my sorrow,
But nothing of my love. Whate'er thou dost
Is sanctified by being done by thee—
Thy crime hath lost its hatefulness. I pass'd

By Phœbus' shrine; and, or his angry form
Wore less of terror, or my soul had learn'd
To scorn a God, that could not save his faithful
From misery, or teach them to endure it.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

Heard ye?——

CALLIAS.

Alas! what hath the old man said.
That ye lower on me with reproachful brows?
Oh friends! I have been dreaming of my daughter,
Dreaming in sleep, which but the soft remembrance
Of her bewitching ways shed o'er mine eyes,
And know not what I think, or what I say.

THE MULTITUDE.

Olybius! Back—back—Olybius!

FIRST CITIZEN.

Rend, rend the heaven with shouts, cast high your caps,
And wave your garlands as the autumn wind
Waves the vine-tendrils.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Citizens, behold him!
With how serene a step he mounts the throne,
As 'twere his birthright to o'erawe mankind
With his superior state.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

How like to Neptune!
That sits upon his lofty car, and rules
All ocean with the shaking of his trident;

The Ægean and the barbarous Pontic seas,
The Tyrrhene and the stormy Adriatic,
And the wide surface of the Libyan main,
To where it breaks on Calpe's rock, rise up
In tumult, or lie strewn in breathless peace
Beneath his nod,—even thus Olybius sways
The surges of yon boundless multitudes.

FIRST CITIZEN.

If Cæsar's self looks from his Capitol
With nobler and more Jove-like brow, mankind
Must shrink into the earth before him.

OLYBIUS.

Callias!

FOURTH CITIZEN.

Thou'rt beckon'd from the crowd by great Olybius.
Happy old man!

CALLIAS.

Accursed happiness!
And will he set my childless misery up
To be a wider gaze?—My Lord, I'm here.

OLYBIUS.

Sit, Callias, here, beneath our feet.

CALLIAS.

'Tis well:
He from whose heart ye rend the sacrifice
Should have an eminent station to behold it.

OLYBIUS (*apart*).

Forbear thy bitter speech—there 's hope——

CALLIAS.

What hope?

Alas! I'm now so sunk in misery,
I know not what to hope, or what to fear.
Will it offend thee should I veil my face,
Lest my weak tears reprove thy sterner justice?

OLYBIUS.

Rack me not thus—but—peace!—Let the rites begin.

MACER.

The maids lift up their hymn around the temple.

HYMN TO APOLLO.

I.

Io Pæan! as we sing
Light our fragrant censers swing,
And each laden basket showers
All its painted store of flowers.
Io Pæan! Clarian God!
Come and fill thy proud abode.

Io Pæan! we behold
Nought but walls that flame with gold;
Long retiring colonnades
Crowded with the sacred maids:
Io Pæan! youth divine,
Opes not yet thy secret shrine?

Io Pæan! 'tis not vain;
Far be every foot profane!
Lo, the golden tripod shakes,
And the marble pavement quakes:
Spare, oh spare our dazzled sight,
Lo, unveil'd the Lord of Light!

II.

The God! the God! behold him come
Down through the round and sky-like dome,
In one wide flood of radiant gold
O'er all the kindling statue roll'd;
From his unclouded throne on high
Rushes the effulgent Deity.

The God! the God! in every vein
The panting marble lives again:
The cheeks with beauteous anger glow,
And burns the high exulting brow:
The motion of the irradiate hair
Proclaims Latona's offspring there.

III.

Io Pæan! we adore thee,
Phœbus, low we bow before thee.
Io Pæan! Lycian king!
Syria's crowding myriads sing:
Io Pæan! Heaven and earth
Mingle in our holy mirth.

OLYBIUS.

Now lead the captives forth to hear their doom—
To worship at yon sumptuous shrine, or die.

VOPISCUS.

They come! they come! the universal yell
Of execration follows them along,
Deepening as it approaches, like the roar
Of thunders travelling up the cloudy heavens,
Till o'er our heads it bursts.

OLYBIUS.

What sounds are these,
So melancholy, yet so full of joy,
Like songs of victory round some aged chief,
That in the war hath lost his only son?

THE ABOVE, THE CHRISTIANS.

CHRISTIAN HYMN.

Oh Jesus! by the mortal pains we bear,
And by the galling chains and garb of shame we wear,
Sad son of Mary! are thy children known:—
And by our flesh with ruthless scourges torn,
By unrelenting man's insatiate hate and scorn,
Crucified Sufferer! are we not thine own?
Oh man of sorrows! and with grief acquainted,
Along the path of woe, like thine, our feet have fainted:
And anguish soon shall choke our parting breath,
And soon our tortured limbs, like thine, be cold in death.

Oh Jesus! by the strength thou givest still,
And by our cheerful scorn of infamy and ill,
Son of the Highest, are thy children known.
By all the exulting joy we inly feel
Beneath the lictor's rod, or headsman's biting steel,
Triumphant Saviour! are we not thine own?
Oh Lord of glory, to the Sire ascended,
Like thine, our anguish soon shall be in rapture ended,
And we shall stand thy starry host among,
And round the sapphire throne swell high the Hosanna song!

MACER.

What, madmen! hath the scourge and torture taught
No wisdom?

OLYBIUS.

By the Gods! look there, look there,
Callias! she wears the bridal robe, and holds
The sacred lyre.

VOPISCUS.

All Antioch waits the doom
Of great Olybius! wherefore doth he pause,
And bend to that old priest?

MACER.

He rises—Peace!

OLYBIUS.

Hear me once more, ye proud rebellious men,
Or never hear again the voice of man.
Behold the temple, where all Antioch serves!

Behold the God himself, whose dreadful brow
Awe-strikes the soul to speechless homage! Serve
And live, or die on earth in fiery anguish,
And be thrust down t' infernal Nemesis,
For Hell's dark Gods t' avenge insulted Heaven.

CHRISTIANS.

The Lord our God is with us, and we fear not.

OLYBIUS.

The Lord your God—where?

FABIUS.

Every where—the worlds
Are all his chambers; this capacious earth
Is but the footstool of his throne, the heavens
Hang in their folds of light t' o'ercanopy
The Omnipresent.

CHARINUS.

Where?—in thunderclouds
Of vengeance, which but wait our voice to launch them
Upon thine head.

OLYBIUS.

We call'd you not before us
To stun our ears with this unholy madness.
The hour of mercy 's o'er—or sacrifice
Or die.

CHRISTIANS.

We will not sacrifice to gods
Wrought by man's hands.

CHARINUS.

Ye laugh, but your mad laughter,
Proud Heathens, shall be changed to scalding tears.

OLYBIUS.

Diodotus! brave soldier, wilt thou fall
In this ignoble warfare?

DIODOTUS.

Rather call it
The noblest conquest Roman ever won.

OLYBIUS.

Charinus! dost accept the proffer'd mercy?

CHARINUS.

False infidel!

OLYBIUS.

Enough.—Calanthias!

CALANTHIAS.

I thought t' have seen, even in my flesh, the Lord
Come down t' avenge his own; but I shall see him,
A blazing follower in his kingly train.

OLYBIUS.

Fabius! thine age should teach thee wisdom.

FABIUS.

Youth,
Mine age does only make me fondly mourn,
That I have but the dregs and lees of life
To pour for my Redeemer.

OLYBIUS.

What! are all
So full of frenzy?

CHRISTIANS.

All so full of faith.

OLYBIUS.

Last then to thee, fair Priestess! Art thou still
Resolved with this ungodly crew to share
Our vengeance, or declares that bridal dress
A soft revolt, and falling off to love?

MARGARITA.

To love—but not of man. Oh! pardon me.
Olybius, if my wedding garb afflict
Thy soul with hope; I had but robes of sadness,
Nor would I have my day of victory seem
A day of mourning. But as the earthly bride
Lingers upon the threshold of her home,
And through the mist of parting tears surveys
The chamber of her youth, even so have I
With something of a clinging fondness look'd
Upon the flowers and trees of lovely Daphne.
Sweet waters, that have murmur'd to my prayers;
Banks, where my hand hath cull'd sweet chaplets, once
For rites unholy, since to strew the graves
Of buried saints! and thou, majestic temple!
That wouldst become a purer worship, thou,
How oft from all thine echoing shrines hast answer'd
To my soft lyre—Farewell! for heaven I quit you.
But yet nor you, nor these my loved companions
Once in the twilight dance and morning song,
Though ye are here to hymn my death, not you
Can I forsake without a bleeding spirit.

OLYBIUS.

She weeps! Wise Macer—such a melting nature
Will ne'er endure——

MARGARITA.

Olybius, wilt thou scorn
A criminal's blessing? God repay thy love,
Forgive thy cruelty!——But thou—oh thou!
That liv'st but in my life, no parting bride
But in her ecstasy of sorrow clasps
Her father's knees, and sobs upon his bosom,
That is no more to be her place of refuge.
Father! my fetter'd arms are stretch'd in vain,
But haply They are merciful, and prevent
A keener pang.

CALLIAS.

Let me approach her!

OLYBIUS.

Never
Till she accept our mercy. Sacrifice,
Nor aught of bridal joy or bridal sorrow
Shall be denied thee.
Beautiful! what mean'st thou?
Why dost thou look to yon bright heaven? what seest,
That makes thy full eyes kindle as they gaze,
Undazzled, on the fiery sky?—Give place—
Strike off those misplaced fetters from her limbs:
The sunshine falls around her like a mantle,
The robes of saffron flame like gold—Give place.

MACER.

Great Phœbus conquers! See, she strikes the lyre
With his ecstatic fervor.

CALLIAS.

Peace—oh peace!
And I shall hear once more before I die
That voice on which I've lived these long, long years.
Hark, even the winds are mute to hear her—Peace!

MARGARITA.

What means yon blaze on high?
The empyrean sky
Like the rich veil of some proud fane is rending.
I see the star-paved land,
Where all the angels stand,
Even to the highest height in burning rows ascending.
Some with their wings dispread,
And bow'd the stately head,
As on some mission of God's love departing,
Like flames from midnight conflagration starting;
Behold! the appointed messengers are they,
And nearest earth they wait to waft our souls away.

Higher and higher still
More lofty statures fill
The jasper courts of the everlasting dwelling.
Cherub and Seraph pace
The illimitable space,
While sleep the folded plumes from their white shoulders swelling.

From all the harping throng
Bursts the tumultuous song,
Like the unceasing sounds of cataracts pouring,
Hosanna o'er Hosanna louder soaring;
That faintly echoing down to earthly ears,
Hath seem'd the consort sweet of the harmonious spheres.

Still my rapt spirit mounts,
And lo! beside the founts
Of flowing light Christ's chosen Saints reclining;
Distinct amid the blaze
Their palm-crown'd heads they raise,
Their white robes even through that o'erpowering lustre shining.
Each in his place of state,
Long the bright Twelve have sate,
O'er the celestial Sion high uplifted;
While those with deep prophetic raptures gifted,
Where Life's glad river rolls its tideless streams,
Enjoy the full completion of their heavenly dreams.

Again—I see again
The great victorious train,
The Martyr Army from their toils reposing:
The blood-red robes they wear
Empurpling all the air,
Even their immortal limbs, the signs of wounds disclosing.

Oh, holy Stephen! thou
Art there, and on thy brow
Hast still the placid smile it wore in dying,
When under the heap'd stones in anguish lying
Thy clasping hands were fondly spread to heaven,
And thy last accents pray'd thy foes might be forgiven.

Beyond! ah, who is there
With the white snowy hair?
'Tis he—'tis he, the Son of Man appearing!
At the right hand of One,
The darkness of whose throne
That sun-eyed seraph Host behold with awe and fearing.
O'er him the rainbow springs,
And spreads its emerald wings,
Down to the glassy sea his loftiest seat o'erarching.
Hark—thunders from his throne, like steel-clad armies marching—
The Christ! the Christ commands us to his home!
Jesus, Redeemer, Lord, we come, we come, we come!

THE MULTITUDE.

Blasphemy! blasphemy! She doth profane
Great Phœbus' raptures—tear her off!

OLYBIUS.

Ha! slaves,
Would ye usurp our judgment throne?

MACER.

Be calm.

CALLIAS.

Alas! what mean ye, friends? can such a voice
Offend you? Oh, my child! thou'rt forced to leave me,
But not to leave me with averted eye,
As though thy father's face were hateful to thee.
But yet I dare not chide thee, and I will not.
I do remember, when thy mother pass'd
I hid my face in my cold shuddering hands,
But still I gaze on thee, and gaze as though
There were a joy in seeing thee even thus.

OLYBIUS.

Macer, thou know'st their separate doom. Lead off
The victims, each to his appointed place.

CHRISTIANS.

Glory! Glory! Glory! the Lord Almighty liveth,
The Lord Almighty doth but take the mortal life he giveth,
Glory! Glory! Glory! the Lord Almighty reigneth,
He who forfeits earthly life, a life celestial gaineth.

CALLIAS.

Why do ye hold me back!—My child! they bind me
With the hard fetters of their arms—thou hear'st not.
Speak! have ye children? have ye ever heard
An infant voice that murmur'd to you "Father!"
Ye Gods, how have ye peopled this fierce Antioch,
That the fond natural love of child and parent
Is made a crime.
Howl, howl; ay, bloody men,
Howl in your Amphitheatre with joy:

Glut your insatiate hearts with human blood.
—Nay, ruthless Prefect, thou'st not sent her there
To perish : not to have her tender limbs
Rent—torn—

THE ABOVE, OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Great Prefect, he is dead——

CALLIAS.

He—he—
'Twas he, thou said'st?

OFFICER.

Diodotus, great Prefect.
In the arena, as became a soldier,
He stood with undiscolour'd cheek, while lay
The crouching lion stiffening all his mane,
With his white-gleaming teeth, and lashing tail,
Scourging to life the slumbering wrath within him.
But the calm victim looked upon the people,
Piled o'er each other in the thronging seats,
And utter'd these strange words—"Alas! lost souls,
"There's one that, fiercer than yon brinded lion,
"Is prowling round, insatiate to devour——"
Nought more we heard, but one long savage howl
Of the huge monster as he sprang, and then
The grinding of his ravening jaws.

THE ABOVE, SECOND OFFICER.

CALLIAS.

Another—

And what hast thou to say?

SECOND OFFICER.

Calanthias died
Beneath the scourge; his look toward the sky,
As though he thought the golden clouds conceal'd
Some slow avenger of his cause.

OLYBIUS.

What now?

VOPISCUS.

The voice of triumph clamours up the skies,
And Phœbus' name is mingled with the shouts
Of transport.

CALLIAS.

Can it be?

THE ABOVE, THIRD OFFICER.

THIRD OFFICER.

Apollo triumphs!

CALLIAS.

Thou say'st not so—she will not sacrifice—
My child, I look'd not yet for this.
What's here?

THE ABOVE, CHARINUS.

CALLIAS.

Back, thou foul wretch! I rush'd not forth to thee.

CHARINUS.

Foul wretch, indeed! I have forsworn my God.
The blinding flames scorch'd up into mine eyes;
And the false devils murmur'd all around me
Soft sounds of water.

OLYBIUS.

Hurry him away!
On to the altar!

THE MULTITUDE.

Io! Io Pæan!
Io Triumphe!

CHARINUS.

Hah! they point at me,
The angels from the clouds, my blissful brethren,
That mount in radiance: ere they're lost in light,
With sad, and solemn, and reproachful voices
They call me Judas—Judas, that betray'd,
That murder'd his blest master—and himself—
Accurst of men—and outcast from thy fold,
Oh Christ! and for my pride?—why then I'll wrap
My soul in stern obduracy, and live
As jocund as the careless Heathen here.
No Peter's tears fill my dry eyes; no beam
Of mercy on my darkening soul—On, on—
And I will laugh, and in my laughter sing
Io Triumphe! Io Pæan!

OLYBIUS.

Now
Give him the knife of sacrifice.

CHARINUS.

Down! Down!
'Tis wet, and reeks with my Redeemer's blood.

OFFICER.

He 's fled.

OLYBIUS.

Go after—drag him back.

OFFICER.

'Tis vain.
He cried aloud—"The devil hath wrestled with me,
"And vanquish'd!"—and he plunged the sacred knife
To his unhallow'd heart.

OLYBIUS.

Ignoble wretch!
Who dared not die—yet fear'd to live.
But pause—
What means this deathlike stillness? not a sound
Or murmur from yon countless multitudes.
A pale contagious horror seems to creep
Even to our presence. Men gaze mutely round,
As in their neighbour's face to read the secret
They dare not speak themselves.
Old man! whence com'st thou?
What is't?

CALLIAS.

I know not! I approach'd the place
Of sacrifice, and my spirit shrank within me;
And I came back, I know not how.

OLYBIUS.

Still mute!
Even thus along his vast domain of silence
Dark Pluto gazes, where the sullen spirits
Speak only with fix'd looks, and voiceless motions—
And ye are like them.—Speak to me, I charge you,
Nor let mine own voice, like an evil omen,
Load the hot air, unanswer'd.

CALLIAS.

Hark!

VOPISCUS.

Didst hear it?
That shriek, as though some barbarous foe had scaled
The city walls.

OLYBIUS.

Is't horror or compassion?
Or both?

THE ABOVE, FOURTH OFFICER.

OLYBIUS.

What means thy hurried look? Speak—speak!
Though thy words blast like lightning.

OFFICER.

Mighty Prefect,
The apostate Priestess Margarita——

OLYBIUS.

How?
Where's Macer?

OFFICER.

By the dead.

OLYBIUS.

What dead?

OFFICER.

Remove
Thy sword, which thou dost brandish at my throat,
And I shall answer.

OLYBIUS.

Speak, and instantly,
Or I will dash thee down, and trample from thee
Thy hideous secret.

OFFICER.

It is nothing hideous—
'Tis but the enemy of our faith.—She died
Nobly, in truth—but——

CALLIAS.

Dead! she is not dead!
Thou liest! I have his oath, the Prefect's oath;
I had forgot it in my fears, but now
I well remember, that she should not die.
Faugh! who will trust in gods and men like these?

OLYBIUS.

Slave! Slave! dost mock me? Better 'twere for thee
That this be false, than if thou'dst found a treasure
To purchase kingdoms.

OFFICER.

Hear me but a while.

She had beheld each sad and cruel death,
And if she shudder'd, 'twas as one that strives
With nature's soft infirmity of pity,
One look to heaven restoring all her calmness;
Save when that dastard did renounce his faith,
And she shed tears for him. Then led they forth
Old Fabius. When a quick and sudden cry
Of Callias, and a parting in the throng,
Proclaim'd her father's coming. Forth she sprang,
And clasped the frowning headsman's knees, and said—
"Thou know'st me, when thou laid'st on thy sick bed
"Christ sent me there to wipe thy burning brow.
"There was an infant play'd about thy chamber,
"And thy pale cheek would smile and weep at once,
"Gazing upon that almost orphan'd child—
"Oh! by its dear and precious memory,
"I do beseech thee, slay me first and quickly;
"'Tis that my father may not see my death."

CALLIAS.

Oh cruel kindness! and I would have closed
Thine eyes with such a fond and gentle pressure;
I would have smooth'd thy beauteous limbs, and laid
My head upon thy breast, and died with thee.

OLYBIUS.

Good father! once I thought to call thee so,
How do I envy thee this her last fondness;
She had no dying thought of me.—Go on.

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OFFICER.

With that the headsman wiped from his swarth cheeks
A moisture like to tears. But she, meanwhile,
On the cold block composed her head, and cross'd
Her hands upon her bosom, that scarce heaved,
She was so tranquil; cautious, lest her garments
Should play the traitors to her modest care.
And as the cold wind touch'd her naked neck,
And fann'd away the few unbraided hairs,
Blushes o'erspread her face, and she look'd up
As softly to reproach his tardiness:
And some fell down upon their knees, some clasp'd
Their hands, enamour'd even to adoration
Of that half-smiling face and bending forin.

CALLIAS.

But he—but he—the savage executioner——

OFFICER.

He trembled.

CALLIAS.

Ha! God's blessing on his head!
And the axe slid from out his palsied hand?

OFFICER.

He gave it to another.

CALLIAS.

And——

OFFICER.

It fell.

CALLIAS.

I see it,

I see it like the lightning flash—I see it,
And the blood bursts—my blood!—my daughter's blood!
Off—let me loose.

OFFICER.

Where goest thou?

CALLIAS.

To the Christian,
To learn the faith in which my daughter died,
And follow her as quickly as I may.

OLYBIUS, MACER, AND THE REST.

OLYBIUS.

Macer! is this thy faithful service?

MACER.

Ah,
So rapid——

OLYBIUS.

Not a word! Thou think'st I'll stoop
To dash thee to the earth—But I'm so sick
Of this accursed pomp, I will not use
Its privilege of vengeance.
Fatal trappings
Of proud authority, that like the robe
Of Nessus shine and burn into the entrails!—
Supremacy! whose great prerogative
Is to be blasted by superior misery!
No more will I possess the fatal power

Of murdering those I love. All-ruling sceptre!
That wert mine instrument of bloodshed, down!
Mine hand shall never grasp thee more. Vopiscus,
Assume the vacant Prefect's seat, and be
Curst like myself—with sway—I cannot wish thee
A doom more hateful—

Who comes here?

OFFICER.

Great Prefect!

The enchantress Margarita by her death
Hath wrought upon the changeful populace,
That they cry loudly on the Christians' God.
Embolden'd multitudes from every quarter
Throng forth, and in the face of day proclaim
Their lawless faith. They have ta'en up the body,
And hither, as in proud ovation, bear it
With clamour and with song. All Antioch crowds
Applauding round them—they are here, behold them.

CHRISTIAN HYMN.

Sing to the Lord! let harp, and lute, and voice
Up to the expanding gates of Heaven rejoice,
While the bright Martyrs to their rest are borne;
Sing to the Lord! their blood-stain'd course is run,
And every head its diadem hath won,
Rich as the purple of the summer morn;
Sing the triumphant champions of their God,
While burn their mounting feet along their sky-ward road.

Sing to the Lord! for her in Beauty's prime
Snatch'd from this wintry earth's ungenial clime,
In the eternal spring of Paradise to bloom;
For her the world displayed its brightest treasure,
And the airs panted with the songs of pleasure.
Before earth's throne she chose the lowly tomb,
The vale of tears with willing footsteps trod,
Bearing her Cross with thee, incarnate Son of God!

Sing to the Lord! it is not shed in vain,
The blood of martyrs! from its freshening rain
High springs the Church like some fount-shadowing palm;
The nations crowd beneath its branching shade,
Of its green leaves are kingly diadems made,
And wrapt within its deep embosoming calm
Earth sinks to slumber like the breezeless deep,
And war's tempestuous vultures fold their wings and sleep.

Sing to the Lord! no more the Angels fly
Far in the bosom of the stainless sky
The sound of fierce licentious sacrifice.
From shrined alcove, and stately pedestal,
The marble Gods in cumbrous ruin fall,
Headless in dust the awe of nations lies,
Jove's thunder crumbles in his mouldering hand,
And mute as sepulchres the hymnless temples stand.

Sing to the Lord! from damp prophetic cave
No more the loose-hair'd Sibyls burst and rave;
Nor watch the augurs pale the wandering bird:
No more on hill or in the murky wood,
Mid frantic shout and dissonant music rude,
In human tones are wailing victims heard;
Nor fathers by the reeking altar stone
Cowl their dark heads t' escape their children's dying groan.

Sing to the Lord! no more the dead are laid
In cold despair beneath the cypress shade,
To sleep the eternal sleep, that knows no morn:
There, eager still to burst death's brazen bands,
The Angel of the Resurrection stands;
While, on its own immortal pinions borne,
Following the Breaker of the emprisoning tomb,
Forth springs the exulting soul, and shakes away its gloom.

Sing to the Lord! the desert rocks break out,
And the throng'd cities, in one gladdening shout;
The farthest shores by pilgrim step explored;
Spread all your wings, ye winds, and waft around,
Even to the starry cope's pale waning bound,
Earth's universal homage to the Lord;
Lift up thine head, imperial Capitol,
Proud on thy height to see the banner'd Cross unroll.

Sing to the Lord! when Time itself shall cease,
And final Ruin's desolating peace
  Enwrap this wide and restless world of man;
When the Judge rides upon the enthroning wind,
And o'er all generations of mankind
  Eternal Justice waves its winnowing Fan;
To vast Infinity's remotest space,
While ages run their everlasting race,
Shall all the Beatific Hosts prolong,
Wide as the glory of the Lamb, the Lamb's triumphant
    song!

BELSHAZZAR.

CHARACTERS.

The DESTROYING ANGEL.	KALASSAN, *High Priest of Bel.*	
BELSHAZZAR.	DANIEL,	*Jews.*
ARIOCH, *Captain of the Guard.*	IMLAH,	
SABARIS, *Chief Eunuch.*	ADONIJAH,	

NITOCRIS, *Mother of Belshazzar.*

NAOMI.

BENINA.

Babylonian Nobles—Priests—Diviners—Astrologers, &c.

SCENE—*Babylon.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THOUGH, in the following Poem, I have adhered strictly to the outline in Scripture, I have availed myself of whatever appeared to my purpose in the profane historians. My general authorities, where I do not follow the Book of Daniel, are Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus; but, perhaps, the best English account of Babylon is to be found in Prideux's Connexion of the Old and New Testament.

The publication of the "Martyr of Antioch" was considerably delayed by unforeseen circumstances. I take the liberty of mentioning this for two reasons. In the first place, because a coincidence in several circumstances between that Poem and the Novel of Valerius, has led to a charge of plagiarism; when, in fact, the Poem was written, and had been seen by some of my friends, before the publication of the prose work. Secondly, I am unwilling that my Poems should appear to follow each other with a haste and rapidity inconsistent with that deference for public opinion, which the manner of their reception would rather increase than diminish.

May I presume to hope that this, as well as the preceding works of the same nature, may tend to the advancement of those interests, in subservience to which alone our time and talents can be worthily employed—those of virtue and religion.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

I could not disguise from myself that the reception of Belshazzar was less favourable than that of the two Dramas which had preceded it. I am inclined to attribute some part of this diminished success to the nature of the subject. That subject of itself excites expectations which it would be difficult to fulfil. The more awful circumstance of the whole history is pre-occupied, as it were, by the sublime simplicity of the Scriptural narrative, and is to most readers invested in a sanctity, as well as grandeur, which is disturbed and interfered with, by any new form in which the incidents are combined, or any different colouring in which they are arrayed. We have the picture already before us; if the Poet's conception is the same as our own, it is more feeble, at all events it has not the power of novelty or originality. Babylon and Belshazzar were, if I may so speak, already too poetical, to have been wisely chosen as subjects for poetry. Independent of this, I doubt whether the oriental character which, whatever my success, I conceive that I was right in attempting to preserve, is likely to suit modern, perhaps more severe and genuine taste. Grandeur and gorgeousness,—grandeur which swells into

enormity, and gorgeousness which accumulates all that is rich, dazzling, and barbaric,—belong, as it were, to our primary notions of these old Asiatic monarchies; but if elaborately wrought out, (and unless elaborate, they will scarcely satisfy the imagination,) they are oppressive and fatiguing. My object was to relieve them by the more simple and natural emotions awakened by the Jewish Captives, yet even they, I felt, ought still to maintain their peculiar character—to be something foreign and Oriental. The whole, in short, belonged to a region somewhat too remote from our common sympathies for popularity, even in the better and nobler sense of the word. It was my design in this poem to be Asiatic: whether I have succeeded or not, I presume not to say, but even if my success had been complete, I question much whether I should have made any lively impression on public feeling. Oriental poetry (though in fact it is extremely various both in style and character; as, for instance, the exquisite and simple touches of domestic feeling in the old Indian Epics,) has never found much favour with the English, scarcely with the European, reader. But I confess that my own latitudinarian love for poetry, in all its characteristic forms, enables me, after I have paid my first and most fervent homage to the exquisite grandeur and purity of the Greek, (the Hebrew, of course, as connected with more sacred sentiments, stands alone,) the majesty and common-sense vigour of the Latin, to all the infinitely various creations of modern imagination, Italian, Spanish, English, and German, still to reserve some admiration for the exotic and barbarous, it may be, but still occasionally beautiful and even sublime conceptions of the East. How far fastidious and exclusive taste is consistent with true philosophy, I presume not to

inquire; for my own part, by permitting myself to admire poetry in all its varieties, I am quite sure that I enlarge my sphere of blameless enjoyment. Nor do I feel that I weaken my perceptions of the excellence of the great master-pieces of ancient art; if I may venture such language, I am as zealous and ardent a worshipper of the older and established divinities, or our Penates, Shakspeare and Milton, though my Pantheon will likewise admit the deities of climes and languages, not generally recognised as legitimate objects of adoration.

There seemed peculiar propriety in the poetical machinery (I dislike the term) of angels in the present drama. It is an essential part of the Zoroastrian and Chaldæan, or rather of the Oriental religion. It has often been observed, that the Hebrew poems, during and after the Captivity, abound more in angelic appearances. There is some approximation in the later prophets to that kind of celestial hierarchy, which was afterwards organised, in the Rabbinical writings, into regular ranks and gradations, and to the notion of the guardian angels of different nations, and even of individuals.

BELSHAZZAR.

The City of Babylon—Morning.

THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

Within the cloud-pavilion of my rest,
Amid the Thrones and Princedoms, that await
Their hour of ministration to the Lord,
I heard the summons, and I stood with wings
Outspread for flight, before the Eternal Throne.
And, from the unapproached depth of light
Wherein the Almighty Father of the worlds
Dwells, from seraphic sight by glory veil'd,
Came forth the soundless mandate, which I felt
Within, and sprung upon my obedient plumes.
But as I sail'd my long and trackless voyage
Down the deep bosom of unbounded space,
The manifest bearer of Almighty wrath,
I saw the Angel of each separate star
Folding his wings in terror, o'er his orb
Of golden fire; and shuddering till I pass'd
To pour elsewhere Jehovah's cup of vengeance.

And now I stand upon this world of man,
My wonted resting place—But thou, oh Earth!
Thou only, dost endure my fatal presence
Undaunted. As of old, I hover o'er
This haughty city of Chaldean Bel,
That not the less pours forth her festal pomp
To do unholy worship to her Gods,
That are not Gods, but works of mortal hands.
Behold! the Sun hath burst the Eastern gates,
And all his splendor floods the tower'd walls,
Upon whose wide immeasurable circuit
The harnessed chariots crowd in long array.
Down every stately line of pillar'd street,
To each of the hundred brazen gates, young men
And flower-crown'd maidens, lead the mazy dance.
Here the vast Palace, whence yon airy gardens
Spread round, and to the morning airs hang forth
Their golden fruits and dewy opening flowers;
While still the low mists creep, in lazy folds,
O'er the house-tops beneath. In every court,
Through every portal, throng, in servile haste,
Captains and Nobles. There, before the Temple,
On the far side of wide Euphrates' stream,
The Priests of Bel their impious rites prepare:
And cymbal clang, and glittering dulcimer,
With shrill melodious salutation, hail
The welcome morn, awakening all the City
To the last dawn that e'er shall gladden her.

Babylon! Babylon! that wak'st in pride
And glory, but shalt sleep in shapeless ruin,
Thus, with my broad and overshadowing wings,
I do embrace thee for mine own; forbidding,
Even at this instant, yon bright orient Sun,
To shed his splendors on thy lofty streets.
Oh, Desolation's sacred place, as now
Thou'rt darken'd, shall the darkness of the dead
Enwrap thee in its everlasting shade!
Babylon! Babylon! upon the wreck
Of that most impious tower your Fathers rear'd
To scale the crystal battlements of Heaven,
I set my foot, here take my gloomy rest
Even till that hour be come, that comes full soon.

Before the Temple.

KALASSAN—THE PRIESTS.

FIRST PRIEST.

Didst thou behold it?

SECOND PRIEST.

What?

FIRST PRIEST.

'Tis gone, 'tis past—
And yet but now 'twas there, a cloudy darkness,
That, swallowing up the rays of the orient Sun,
Cast back a terrible night o'er all the City.

THIRD PRIEST.

Who stands aghast at this triumphant hour?

I tell thee that our Dreamers have beholden
Majestic visions. The besieging Mede
Was cast, with all his chariots, steeds, and men,
Into Euphrates' bosom.

KALASSAN.

Do ye marvel
But now that it was dark? yon orient Sun,
The Lord of Light, withdrew his dawning beams,
Till he could see the glory of the world,
Belshazzar, in his gilded galley riding
Across Euphrates.

FIRST PRIEST.

Give command that all
The brazen gates along the river side
Stand open to receive the suppliant train.

SECOND PRIEST.

Hark! with the trumpet sound their strong recoil
Upon their grating hinges harshly mingles.

THIRD PRIEST.

Lo! how the bridge is groaning with the gifts
Of the great King. The camels bow their heads
Beneath the bright and odorous load they bear;
The proud steeds toss their flower-enwoven manes,
And the cars rattle with their ponderous sound;
While, silent, the slow elephants pursue
Their wondering way, and bear their crowded towers,
Widely reflected on the argent stream.

FOURTH PRIEST.

How proudly do the waters toss and foam

Before the barges, that with gilded prows
Set the pale spray on fire! The rowers, clad
In Egypt's finest tunics, as they strike
The waters with their palmy oars, awake
Sweet music, as it seems, from all the tide;
So exquisitely to the dashing strokes
Are the sweet lutes and floating hautboys timed.

FIRST PRIEST.

Yon bark, in which, at times, the silken curtains
Are by the courteous breezes fann'd aside,
Is that in which the mother of the mightiest,
Nitocris, sits. Her presence seems to awe
At once, and give a pride to those who row
Her queenly state——

KALASSAN.

Behind—'tis he!—'tis he!—
Belshazzar's self—the waters crowd around,
As though ambitious to reflect their Sovereign;
And all the throng'd and living shores, that now
To the far limits of the City, pass'd
His name in one long shout, have paused to hear
Our loftier homage.——Are the Seventy here?

FIRST PRIEST.

All.

KALASSAN.

Lift we, then, the solemn strain, in praise
Of the great King, and all the suppliant court
Will answer us in praise of mightiest Bel.

SONG OF THE PRIESTS.

Where are the thousand-throned kings,
Beneath whose empires' spacious wings
The wide earth lay in mute repose?
He rose—Chaldea's King arose!
And bow'd was every crowned head,
And every marshall'd army fled;
Before his footstool bow'd they down,
The all-conquering Lord of Babylon* !

SONG OF THE SUPPLIANTS.

Where are the thousand-shrined Gods,
Within whose temples' proud abodes
The nations crowded to invoke?
He woke, Chaldea's God awoke!
And mute was every sumptuous feast,
And rite, and song, and victim ceased;
And every Fane was overthrown,
Before the God of Babylon† !

PRIESTS.

Ammon's crested pride lay low,
And broke was Elam's horned bow;

* Compare Rabshakeh's speech, II Kings, xix. 11—13. Isaiah xxxvii. 11—13.

† Compare Rabshakeh's speech, II Kings, xviii. 34, 35. Isaiah xxxvi. 19. Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? * * * Where are they among the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?

Damascus heard the ponderous fall
Of old Benhadad's palace wall;
The ocean redd'n'd with the fire
From the rock-built strengths of Tyre.
False was fierce Philistia's trust,
Desert Moab mourns in dust.
Lo! in chains our Captains bring
Haughty Zion's eyeless King*.
Kedar's tents are struck, her bands
Scatter'd o'er her burning sands,
And Egypt's Pharaoh quails before
The Assyrian Lion's conquering roar.

SUPPLIANTS.

From his high Philistine fane,
Sea-born Dagon fled amain;
Moloch, he whose valley stood
Deep with infants' blameless blood:
Chemos, struck with pale affright,
Left his foul unfinished rite.
Her waning moon Astarte veil'd,
When the Tyrian's sea-wall fail'd.
In vain Damascus' children meet
At lofty Rimmon's molten feet.

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* So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon, to Riblah, and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.—II Kings, xxv. 6, 7.

And vain were Judah's prayers to him,
Between the golden Cherubim;
In vain the Arab in his flight,
Call'd on the glittering stars of night;
And vain Osiris' timbrels blew
Over Egypt's maddening crew.

KALASSAN.

Lord of the world, and of the eternal city,
That wear'st Chaldea's regal diadem
Wreath'd with Assyria's, wherefore art thou here
Before the Temple of all-powerful Bel?

BELSHAZZAR.

Chief of the Seventy chosen Priests, that serve
Within the Temple of our God, thou know'st
That the rebellious Mede, confederate
With Ashkenaz and Elam, and the might
Of Persia, hath begirt with insolent siege
Our city walls, and I would know what swift
And terrible vengeance is ordain'd on high
For the revolted from Chaldea's sway?

KALASSAN.

Live thou, oh King, for ever! We are holding
This day our solemn rite. Our Priests and Seers
Each at his office stands throughout the Temple;
And all our eight ascending towers that rise,
Each above each, in heavenward range, are throng'd
With those that strike the cymbal, and with voice

And mystic music summon down the Gods
To give us answer.

BELSHAZZAR.

Priests of Bel, and thou
High mitred Chief, Kalassan! Lo, I bring
Gifts worthy of the gods and of Belshazzar:
All that the world in its vast homage casts
Before our royal feet; the gold that flows
In the red waters of the farthest East;
The fragrant balm that weeps from glittering trees:
The ivory, the thin and snowy robes
Of Egypt; and the purple merchandize
Of Sidon; and the skins of beasts that far
In the dark forests fly the sight of man,
Yet not so far but that Assyria's servants
Track them, and rend away their bloody tribute;
And slaves of every hue, and every age,
From all the kingdoms of our rule.

KALASSAN.

Great King,
What answer wouldst thou, which such sumptuous offerings
May not compel.

BELSHAZZAR.

Declare ye to our Gods,
Thus saith Belshazzar: wherefore am I call'd
The King of Babylon, the sceptred heir

Of Nabonassar's sway*, if still my sight
Must be infested by rebellious arms,
That hem my city round; and frantic cries
Of onset, and the braying din of battle
Disturb my sweet and wonted festal songs?

NITOCRIS.

In the God's name, and in mine own, I answer!
When Nabonassar's heir shall take the sword
Of Nabonassar in his valiant hand;
With the inborn awe of majesty appal
Into the dust Rebellion's crested front:
When for the gliding bark on the smooth waters,
Whose motion doth but lull his silken couch,
He mounts the rushing chariot, and in arms
Asserts himself the lord of human kind.

SABARIS.

Will he endure it?

NITOCRIS.

Oh, my son! my son!
Must I repent me of that thrill of joy
I felt, when round my couch the slaves proclaim'd
I had brought forth a man into the world,
A child for empire born, the cradled Lord
Of nations—oh, my son!—and all the pride

* "Nebuchadnessar—Nabonassar—Ce nom est confondu par les Orientaux avec celui de Nabocadnassar, quoique les Grecs et les Latins les distinguent."—*D'Herbelot, Bibl. Oriental*.

With which I saw thy fair and open brow
Expand in beauteous haughtiness, commanding
Ere thou could'st speak? And with thy growth, thy greatness
Still ripen'd: like the palm amid the grove
Thou stood'st, the loftiest, at once, and comeliest
Of all the sons of men. And must I now
Wish all my pangs upon a shapeless offspring,
Or on a soft and dainty maiden wasted,
That might have been, if not herself, like her
Thy martial ancestress, Semiramis,
Mightiest—at least the Mother of the Mighty?

BELSHAZZAR.

Queen of Assyria, Nabonassar's daughter!
Wife of my royal father, Merodach!
Greater than all, from whom myself was born!
The Gods that made thee mother of Belshazzar,
Have arm'd thee with a dangerous licence. Thou,
Secure, may'st utter what from meaner lips
Had called upon the head the indignant sword
Of Justice. But to thee we deign reply.
Is 't not the charge of the great Gods t' uphold
The splendor of the world that doth them homage?
As soon would they permit the all-glorious Sun
To wither from their palace vault in heaven,
As this rich empire from the earth.

NITOCRIS.

And therefore

Be as the Gods, Belshazzar, and stand forth
To sweep away the desolating foe!
As when the thunders scatter all abroad
The lowering clouds at midnight, all the stars
Look glittering through the bright pellucid sky,
And in the glorious calm themselves have strew'd,
Repose triumphant the great Gods.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh, queen!
The mother of Chaldea's royal lord
Ne'er ask'd in vain. Myself this day will mount
The car of battle, and along the walls
Display my terrors, for Assyria's hosts
To kindle into valour at my presence;
And the pale rebels from their distant camp,
Like hunters that have roused the sleeping lion,
Snatch up their toils, and fly——

NITOCRIS.

Along the walls!
And not along the dusty battle plain?
Yet 'tis enough—the fire but sleeps within thee.
And as the warhorse that hath sported long
On the green meads, beholds the flash of arms
Bright on the fountain where he bathes, and hears
The martial trumpet sounding, start erect
His kindling ears, his agitated mane
Trembles; already on his back he feels
The gorgeous trappings and the armed rider,

And treads the sward as though he trampled down
Whole hosts before him; thus Belshazzar's soul,
At sight of Babylon's exulting foes,
Shall waken to the warrior's noble wrath.

BELSHAZZAR.

Give instant order!

NITOCRIS.

Oh, tiara'd Mede!
And thou fierce Persian that dost boast thyself
As hardy as thy native mountains! Thou,
The shepherd's nursling, Cyrus! feel ye not
A prescient terror of your coming conqueror?
The towers with which ye have girt your spacious camp,
Do they not rock even to their deep foundations,
In conscious awe? But thou, my noble son!
Thy mother's heart, that beat but in thy presence,
Even when thou laid'st in soft inglorious dalliance,
When home thou com'st, high plumed with victory, hosts
In chains around thee, and the routed armies
Crowding to gaze upon their conqueror,
As though it were a solace in their fall
That great Belshazzar stoop'd to overthrow them;
When all the myriads of vast Babylon
Shout in the triumph of their kingly lord;
That heart, my son, with such excess of pride
Will swell, that it will burst. Even now it fills
My woman's eyes with tears: when I should wear
A brow all rapture, I can only weep.

KALASSAN.

Lord of the Nations! with our richest rites
Do we propitiate the eternal Gods.
Upon the golden altar, never wet
Save with the immaculate blood of yearling lambs *
We sacrifice—and on our topmost tower,
Where, on his couch, amid his native clouds,
The God reposes, must the chosen Virgin †,
Whom to our wandering search he first presents,
Await the bright descending Deity.

BELSHAZZAR.

What then!—the Gods hold festival to-night!
And shall the courts of great Chaldea's palace
Be silent of the festal song? At eve
Our banquet shall begin; and dusky night,
Astonish'd at our splendor, think his reign
Usurp'd as by a brighter day. Kalassan!
Whence are those golden vessels richly carved,
And bossy with enchased fruits and flowers;
Goblets, and lavers, and tall chandeliers,
That, like to blossoming almond trees, branch out
In knosps of glittering silver?—meet were they
To minister at great Belshazzar's feast.

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* From Diodorus.

† Herodotus, Clio, clxxxii., relates this usage as taking place not only in Babylon but in the temple of the Egyptian Jupiter, at Thebes, and elsewhere. But the worthy historian ventures to doubt the actual descent of the God,—Φασὶ . . . ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ πιστὰ λέγοντες.

KALASSAN.

King of the Universe! those vessels stood
Erst in the Temple of the Hebrew's God;
But when Chaldea's arms laid waste the City,
And from their Temple, with destroying fire,
Scar'd the unresisting Deity, the spoils
Were seiz'd, and consecrate to mightier Bel.

BELSHAZZAR.

Let them be borne to grace our feast!

KALASSAN.

Most honour'd
Were they by such a noble profanation!
Give ye the order——
Ha! what frantic shriek
Peals through the courts?

PRIEST.

The slaves that girt themselves
To bear those vessels, on a sudden, all,
As though by viewless lightnings struck to earth,
Lie grovelling on the pavement, and they clench
Their vacant hands in horror.

KALASSAN.

Raise them up,
And lash them to their duty.

SECOND PRIEST.

King of Earth!
The armed statue of thy ancestor,

Great Nabonassar, on its firm-set pedestal
Shakes, and its marble panoply resounds
Like distant thunder!

KALASSAN.

How! the pavement rocks
Beneath our feet, like a tempestuous sea!

BELSHAZZAR.

What! are Belshazzar's mandates thus delay'd
For the pale fears of slaves, and idle sounds
That shake the earth, but not his kingly soul?
Away with them! we will not brook remonstrance
From vanquish'd men, or Gods;—Away! I say—

CHORUS.

Sovereign of all the streams that flow
From hills of everlasting snow,
Through vast Chaldea's fertile reign,
Down to the red and pearly main;*
And ere thy giant course is done,
Through all imperial Babylon;
By stately towers and palace fair,
And blooming gardens hung in air;
By every glowing brazen gate,
Rollest thy full exulting state.
Proud River! strew thy waves to rest,
And smooth to peace thy azure breast,

* The Erythrean Sea, the Gulf of Persia, celebrated for the pearls of Ormuz.

While slowly o'er thy willing tide,
Belshazzar's gilded galleys ride.
Hear, King of Floods! Euphrates, hear!
And pay the homage of thy fear.

CHORUS OF SUPPLIANTS.

Sovereign of all the lamps that shine
In yon empyreal arch divine,
That roll'st through half the fiery day,
O'er realms that own Chaldea's sway;
O'er thrones, whose monarchs wear her yoke,
And cities by her conquests broke;
Thou Sun, whose morning splendors dwell
Upon the temple towers of Bel,
The quiver of thy noontide rays
Exhaust in all their fiery blaze,
Upon the cloud-aspiring throne
Where rests the God of Babylon!
So shall the God in glory come
Down to his sumptuous earthly home.
Hear!—Monarch of the Planets! hear—
And pause upon thy fleet career.

The Quarter of the Jewish Slaves.

IMLAH, NAOMI, BENINA.

BENINA.

Father! dear Father! said'st thou that our feet
Shall tread the glittering paths of Sion's hill;

And that our lips shall breathe the fragrant airs
That blow from dewy Hermon, and the fount
Of Siloe flow in liquid music by us?

IMLAH.

Oh, daughter of captivity, and born
To eat the bitter bread of servitude,
Benina, child of sadness!—yet the dearer
Because thou art the joy of desolate hearts
That have no joy but thee!—what knowest thou
Of that fair city, where our Fathers dwelt
While unforsaken by their God?

BENINA.

My father!
Have I not seen my mother and thyself
Sit by the river side, and dwell for ever
On Salem's glories, and the Temple's pride,
Till tears have choked your sad though pleasant speech?
In the deep midnight, when our lords are sleeping,
I've seen the Brethren from the willows take
The wind-caressed harps, their half-breathed sounds
Scarce louder than the rippling river's dash
Around the matted sedge; and still they pour'd
Their voices down the stream, as though they wish'd
Their songs to pass away to other lands
Beyond the bounds of their captivity.
I've listen'd in an ecstasy of tears,
Till purer waters seem'd to wander near me,
And sweeter flowers to bloom beneath my feet,

And towers of fairer structure to arise
Under the moonlight; and I felt the joy
Of freedom in my light and sportive limbs.

IMLAH.

My sweetest child, and thou that gav'st to me
This dearest treasure, Naomi—thyself,
Even as thou wert in virgin loveliness
My plighted bride, renewed to tenderest youth!
I will not say I hope not (though my fears
And conscience of our ill desert reprove me)
That God even now prepares the promised hour,
When Israel shall shake off Assyria's chains,
And build long-wasted Sion's lovely walls.
The sands of the appointed years are run;
The signs break out, as in the cloudy night
The stars; and buried Prophets' voices seem
As from their graves to cry aloud, and mark
The hour that labours with our Israel's glory;
And, more than all, but yesterday I saw
The holy Daniel——

NAOMI.

Daniel! what of him,
Dear Imlah?

IMLAH.

Till but lately he was girt
With sackcloth, with the meagre hue of fasting
On his sunk cheek, and ashes on his head;
When, lo! at once he shook from his grey locks

The attire of woe, and call'd for wine; and since
He hath gone stately through the wondering streets
With a sad scorn. Amid the heaven-piercing towers,
Through cool luxurious courts, and in the shade
Of summer trees that play o'er crystal fountains,
He walks as though he trod o'er moss-grown ruins,
'Mid the deep desolation of a city
Already by the almighty wrath laid waste.
And sometimes doth he gaze upon the clouds,
As though he recognized the viewless forms
Of arm'd destroyers in the silent skies.
And it is said, that at the dead of night
He hath pour'd forth thy burden, Babylon!
And loud proclaim'd the bowing down of Bel,
The spoiling of the spoiler. Even our lords,
As conscious of God's glory gathering round him,
Look on him with a silent awe, nor dare
To check his motion, or reprove his speech.

NAOMI.

Oh, Imlah! shall our buried bones repose
In our own land?

BENINA.

Speak on, my dearest Father,
Thy words are like the breezes of the west,
That breathe of Canaan's honey-flowing land.

IMLAH.

My child! my child! thy nuptials shall not be
With song suppress'd, and dim half-curtain'd lamp,

Stol'n from the observance of our jealous lords,
As mine and thy fond mother's were.—Who 's here?

BENINA.

'Tis Adonijah: he hath heard thee name him,
And he will see the burning on my cheek,
And so detect our cause of fond discourse.

IMLAH.

I named him not——

BENINA.

Nay, father, now thou mock'st me.

IMLAH.

Alas! poor deer, thou'rt deeply stricken! Well—
It is a noble boy, that dares to fear
His God, nor makes his youth a privilege
For licence, and intemperate scorn of rule.

THE ABOVE, ADONIJAH.

IMLAH.

Whence com'st thou, Adonijah, with thy brow
Elate, and full of pride, that scarce beseems
A captive?

ADONIJAH.

Imlah! from the dawn of day
I have been gazing from the walls, and saw
The Persian reining in his fiery squadrons.
Like ostriches they swept the sandy plain,
As though they would outstrip the tardy winds;
And paus'd and wheel'd, and through the clouds of dust

That rose around them, as round terrible Angels,
Their scimitars in silver radiance flash'd.
Oh, will it ever be, that once again
The Lord of Hosts will lift the Lion banner
Of Judah, and her sons go forth to war
Like Joshua, or like him whose beardless strength
O'erthrew the giant Philistine!

BENINA.

Ah, me!
And would'st thou, Adonijah, seek the war,
The ruthless, murderous, and destroying war?

ADONIJAH.

Why, yes! nor would Benina love me less
For bringing home the spoil of God's proud foes,
To hang within his vindicated Temple.

BENINA.

So thou didst bring thyself unharm'd, unchanged,
Benina were content.

ADONIJAH.

Heaven's blessings on thee!

IMLAH.

Hear me, young Adonijah; thou dost love
My child: Benina, shall I say, or leave it
To thine own lips or eloquent eyes to tell,
How well thou lov'st the noble Adonijah?
But, youth, I seek not to delay thy joy
With the cold envious prudence of old age,
That never felt the boiling blood of youth;

For if I did, there's one would chide me here
For my forgetfulness of hours like these.
But yet I would not have my daughter wed
With the sad dowry of a master's stripes;
I would not, Adonijah, on the eve
Of our deliverance, that the wanton Gentile
Should pass his jest on our cold entertainment,
And all the cheerless joy when captives wed,
To breed a race, whose sole inheritance
Shall be their parents' tasks and heavy bondage.
Our father Jacob served seven tardy years
For beauteous Rachel, but I tax not thee
With such a weary service.

ADONIJAH.

Be they ages
So the life beat within this bounding heart,
The love shall never fail!

IMLAH.

Here's one would trust thee,
Youth, should my cautious age be slow. Come hither,
Thou tender vine, that need'st a noble stem:
Repine not thou because I wed thee not
To this fair elm, until the gentle airs
Of our own land, and those delicious dews
That weep like angels' tears of love, o'er all
The hill of Sion, gladden your sweet union,
And make you bear your clustering fruits in joy.
So now, enough, thou dost accept the terms,

And in the name of Him that rules on high,
I thus betroth the noble Adonijah
To soft Benina.—
Now, to him that hears
The captive's prayer. How long—oh, Lord!—how long
Shall strangers trample down thy beauteous Sion?
How long shall Judah's hymns arise to thee
On foreign winds, and sad Jerusalem
On all her hills be desolate and mute?

God of the Thunder! from whose cloudy seat
The fiery winds of Desolation flow:
Father of Vengeance! that with purple feet,
Like a full wine-press, tread'st the world below.
The embattled armies wait thy sign to slay,
Nor springs the beast of havoc on his prey,
Nor withering Famine walks his blasted way,
Till thou the guilty land hast seal'd for woe.

God of the Rainbow! at whose gracious sign
The billows of the proud their rage suppress:
Father of Mercies! at one word of thine
An Eden blooms in the waste wilderness!
And fountains sparkle in the arid sands,
And timbrels ring in maidens' glancing hands,
And marble cities crown the laughing lands,
And pillar'd temples rise thy name to bless.

O'er Judah's land thy thunders broke—oh, Lord!
The chariots rattled o'er her sunken gate,
Her sons were wasted by the Assyrian sword,
Even her foes wept to see her fallen state;
And heaps her ivory palaces became,
Her Princes wore the captive's garb of shame,
Her Temple sank amid the smouldering flame,
For thou didst ride the tempest-cloud of fate.

O'er Judah's land thy rainbow, Lord, shall beam,
And the sad City lift her crownless head;
And songs shall wake, and dancing footsteps gleam,
Where broods o'er fallen streets the silence of the dead.
The sun shall shine on Salem's gilded towers,
On Carmel's side our maidens cull the flowers,
To deck, at blushing eve, their bridal bowers,
And angel feet the glittering Sion tread.

Thy vengeance gave us to the stranger's hand,
And Abraham's children were led forth for slaves;
With fetter'd steps we left our pleasant land,
Envying our fathers in their peaceful graves.
The stranger's bread with bitter tears we steep,
And when our weary eyes should sink to sleep,
'Neath the mute midnight we steal forth to weep,
Where the pale willows shade Euphrates' waves.

The born in sorrow shall bring forth in joy;
Thy mercy, Lord, shall lead thy children home;
He that went forth a tender yearling boy,
Yet, ere he die, to Salem's streets shall come.
And Canaan's vines for us their fruits shall bear,
And Hermon's bees their honied stores prepare;
And we shall kneel again in thankful prayer,
Where, o'er the cherub-seated God, full blaz'd th' irradiate dome.

The Walls of Babylon.

BELSHAZZAR IN HIS CHARIOT, NITOCRIS, ARIOCH, SABARIS, &c.

BELSHAZZAR.

For twice three hours our stately cars have roll'd
Along the broad highway that crowns the walls
Of mine imperial City, nor complete
Our circuit by a long and ample space.
And still our eyes look down on gilded roofs,
And towers and temples, and the spreading tops
Of cedar groves, through which the fountains gleam;
And everywhere the countless multitudes,
Like summer insects in the noontide sun,
Come forth to bask in our life-wakening presence.
Oh, thou vast Babylon! what mighty hand
Created thee, and spread thee o'er the plain
Capacious as a world; and girt thee round
With high tower'd walls, and bound thy gates with brass;

And taught the indignant river to endure
Thy bridge of cedar and of palm, high hung
Upon its marble piers?—What voice proclaim'd,
Amid the silence of the sands, "Arise!
And be earth's wonder?" Was it not my fathers'?
Yea, mine entombed ancestors awake,
Their heads uplift upon their marble pillows;
They claim the glory of thy birth. Thou hunter,
That didst disdain the quarry of the field,
Choosing thee out a nobler game of man,
Nimrod! and thou that with unfeminine hand
Didst lash the coursers of thy battle-car
O'er prostrate thrones, and necks of captive kings,
Semiramis! and thou whose kingly breath
Was like the desert wind, before its coming
The people of all earth fell down, and hid
Their humble faces in the dust! that mad'st
The pastime of a summer day t' o'erthrow
A city, or cast down some ancient throne;
Whose voice each ocean shore obey'd, and all
From sable Ethiopia to the sands
Of the gold-flowing Indian streams;—oh! thou
Lord of the hundred thrones, high Nabonassar!
And thou my father, Merodach! ye crown'd
This City with her diadem of towers—
Wherefore?—but prescient of Belshazzar's birth,
And conscious of your destin'd son, ye toil'd
To rear a meet abode. Oh, Babylon!

Thou hast him now, for whom through ages rose
Thy sky-exalted towers—for whom yon palace
Rear'd its bright domes, and groves of golden spires;
In whom, secure of immortality
Thou stand'st, and consecrate from time and ruin,
Because thou hast been the dwelling of Belshazzar!

NITOCRIS.

I hear thy words: like thine, thy mother's heart
Swells, oh, my son! to see thy seat of empire.
But will the Lord of Babylon endure
What in yon plain beneath offends our sight,
The rebel Persian?

BELSHAZZAR.

Gave we not command,
To Tartan and to Artamas, to sweep
Yon tribes away, or ere our car approach'd
The northern wall?

ARIOCH.

They hasted forth, oh King!
But Tartan came not back, nor Artamas.

BELSHAZZAR.

Slaves! did they dare to fall off from their allegiance?

ARIOCH.

To the dominion they fell off of him
That hath the empire o'er departed souls.

NITOCRIS.

Look down! look down! where, proud of his light conquest,

The Persian rides—it is the youthful Cyrus;
How skilfully he winds through all the ranks
His steed, in graceful ease, as though he sate
Upon a firm-set throne, yet every motion
Obedient to his slack and gentle rein,
As though one will controll'd the steed and rider;
Now leaps he down and holds a brief discourse
With yon helm'd captain; like a pouncing falcon,
Now vaults he to the patient courser's back.
Happy the mother of that noble youth!

BELSHAZZAR.

Now, by great Bel! thou dost abuse our patience.
Is that the rebel king to whom Belshazzar
Should vail his pride, and stoop to be his foe;
Him with the brazen arms, that, dimly bright,
Scarce boast distinction from the meaner host?
Where are his golden attributes of power,
The glorious ensigns of his sovereignty;
The jewel'd diadem, the ivory sceptre,
The satrap-circled throne, the kneeling hosts?——

NITOCRIS.

Dost ask, my son, his marks of sovereignty?
The armies that behold his sign, and trust
Their fate upon the wisdom of his rule,
Confident of accustom'd victory;
The unconquerable valour, the proud love
Of danger, and the scorn of silken ease;
The partnership in suffering and in want,

Even with his meanest follower; the disdain
Of wealth, that wins the spoil but to bestow it,
Content with the renown of conquering deeds.

BELSHAZZAR.

By all our Gods!——

SABARIS.

Great Queen! it ill beseems
The lowest of Chaldea's slaves to oppose
The mother of our king with insolent speech;
But my bold zeal for him that rules the world
Has made me dauntless. Is it not heaven's will,
Written in the eternal course of human things,
Some kings are born to toil, and some to enjoy;
Some to build up the palace domes of power,
That in their glowing shade these may sit
Transcendent in luxurious ease, as they
In conquest? 'Tis the privilege of the chosen,
The mark'd of fate, and favourites of the Gods,
To find submissive earth deck'd out, a fair
And summer garden house, for one long age
Of toilless pleasure, and luxurious revel.

BELSHAZZAR.

The slave speaks well: and thee, oh queen Nitocris!
This eve will we compel, with gracious violence,
To own our loftier fate. This sacred eve
We'll have an army wide as yon that spreads
Its tents to the hot sands; and they shall feast
Around me, all reclined on ivory couches,

Strew'd with Sidonian purple, and soft webs
Of Egypt; fanned by bright and glittering plumes
Held in the snowy hands of virgin slaves;
And o'er their turban'd heads shall lightly wave
The silken canopies, that softly tremble
To gales of liquid odour: all the courts
Shall breathe like groves of cassia and of nard.
And every paradise of golden fruits,
The forests and the tributary streams,
In this one banquet shall exhaust their stores
Of delicates; the swans and Phasian birds,
And roes and deer from off a thousand hills,
Serv'd in the spices of the farthest East.
And we will feast to dulcimers and lutes,
And harps and cymbals, and all instruments
Of rapturous sound, till it shall seem the stars
Have stoop'd the nearer to our earth, to crown
Our banquet with their heavenly concert. There,
Our captains and our councillors, our wives
And bright-eyed concubines, through all the palace
Th' array of splendour shall prolong—while I,
In state supreme, and glory that shall shame
The setting sun amid his purple clouds,
Will on my massy couch of gold recline:
Then shalt thou come, and seeing thy son the orb
And centre of this radiance, even thyself
Shalt wonder at thy impious speech, that dared
To equal aught on earth to great Belshazzar.
And now, lead on!—

THE ABOVE, BENINA, IMLAH, ADONIJAH, PRIESTS.

BENINA.

Ah, save me! save me!

ARIOCH.

Peace!

Before the king!—

BELSHAZZAR.

What frantic maid is this,
That shrieks and flies, with loose and rending garments,
And streaming hair?—And who are these that circle her,
And sing around her?

SABARIS.

Live, oh king, for ever!
Chaldea's priests, that seek this evening's bride
For mightiest Bel.

PRIESTS.

Beauteous damsel! chosen to meet
First our wandering heaven-led feet.
Spotless virgin! thee alone
The great God of Babylon,
From his starry seat above,
Hath beheld with looks of love.
Bride of him that rules the sky!
Cast not down thy weeping eye.
Daughter of the captive race!
For thine high and blissful place,
In the heaven-hung chamber laid,
Many a Babylonian maid

To the voiceless midnight air,
Murmurs low her bashful prayer.
With enamour'd homage see,
Round and round we circle thee;
Round and round each dancing foot
Glitters to the breathing lute.

SABARIS.

Why dost thou struggle thus, fond slave?

BENINA.

My father!—
My dearest Adonijah! speak to him—
The panting breath swells in my throat, my words
Can find no utterance, save to thee.

IMLAH.

Great king!
They rend away my child, mine only child!—

BELSHAZZAR.

Peace! she is borne to serve the God of Babylon:
And ye should fall, and kiss their garment hems,
And bless them for the glory that awaits
The captive maiden——

ADONIJAH.

Glory! call ye it,
To be the lustful prey——

BENINA.

Sweet youth! no more.
Oh, speak not!—by the love thou bearest me—

By all our hopes—alas! what hopes have we?—
Let me endure no sufferings but my own.

BELSHAZZAR.

Priests, to your office!—

BENINA.

Oh! no mercy—none—
Not even in thee, that wear'st a woman's form,
But all the cold relentless pride of man—
Mightiest of queens!—would I might add most gracious—

IMLAH.

God of our fathers! that alone canst save,
Look down upon this guileless innocent.
Lo! pale and fainting, like a wounded fawn
She hangs upon their arms—death scarce could throw
A sadder paleness, or more icy torpor,
Over that form, whose loveliness is now
Its bane, and stamps it for the worst of misery.

ADONIJAH.

Oh, for a Median scimitar!

ARIOCH.

What said he?

BENINA.

Nought—naught!—

ARIOCH.

The slave forgets that scourges hang
Upon our walls—

IMLAH.

And we had fondly thought

The bitter dregs of our captivity
Drunk out! Farewell, my child! thou dost not hear me—
Thou liest in cold and enviable senselessness,
And we might almost fear, or hope, that death—
Compassionate death—had freed thee from their violence.
What now, my child?

ADONIJAH.

Oh, beautiful Benina!
Why do thy timorous dove-like eyes awake,
And glow with scorn? why dost thou shake away
The swoon of bashful fear, and stand erect
Thou, that didst hang, but now, like a [illegible]
Trailing its beauteous clusters in the dust

BENINA.

Give place, and let me speak unto my father.
And to this youth.——
Fierce men! your [illegible] is vain—
I will not stoop to fly.

IMLAH.

My soul is lost
In wonder; yet I touch thee once again,
And that is rapture.

BENINA.

Did ye not behold him
Upon the terrace-top?—the Man of God!
The anointed Prophet!

IMLAH.

Daniel!

BENINA.

He whose lips
Burn with the fire from heaven! I saw him, father:
Alone he stood, and in his proud compassion
Look'd down upon this pomp that blaz'd beneath him,
As one that sees a stately funeral.

IMLAH.

He spoke not?

BENINA.

No:—like words articulate,
His looks address'd my soul, and said—'Oh maid,
Be of good cheer'—and, like a robe of light,
A rapture fell upon me, and I caught
Contagious scorn of earthly power; and fear
And bashful shame are gone, and in the might
Of God, of Abraham's God, our father's God,
I stand, superior to the insulting heathen.

BELSHAZZAR.

What! wait ye still to lead the Gods their slave,
And thus delay Belshazzar's course?

BENINA.

Your Gods!
Whom I disdain to honour with my dread.

BELSHAZZAR.

Off with her! and advance our royal car:—
Set forward.—

[BELSHAZZAR *departs with his train.*

BENINA.

Ye shall need no force to drag me.
My father!—Adonijah!—gaze not thus,
Blaspheming, with your timorous doubts, the arm
Of the Most High, that waves above mine head
In silent might unseen!——
And thou—go on,
Go on thy stately course—Imperial Lord
Of golden Babylon! the scourge that lash'd,
The Nations, from whose mantling cup of pride
Earth drank, and with the fierce intoxication
Scoff'd at the enduring heavens.
Go on, in awe
And splendor, radiant as the morning star,
But as the morning star to be cast down
Into the deep of deeps. Long, long the Lord
Hath bade his Prophets cry to all the world,
That Babylon shall cease! Their words of fire
Flash round my soul, and lighten up the depths
Of dim futurity! I hear the voice
Of the expecting grave!—I hear abroad
The exultation of unfetter'd earth!—
From East to West they lift their trampled necks,
Th' indignant nations: earth breaks out in scorn;
The valleys dance and sing; the mountains shake
Their cedar-crowned tops! The strangers crowd
To gaze upon the howling wilderness,
Where stood the Queen of Nations. Lo! even now,

Lazy Euphrates rolls his sullen waves
Through wastes, and but reflects his own thick reeds.
I hear the bitterns shriek, the dragons cry;
I see the shadow of the midnight owl
Gliding where now are laughter-echoing palaces!
O'er the vast plain I see the mighty tombs
Of kings in sad and broken whiteness gleam
Beneath the o'er grown cypress—but no tomb
Bears record, Babylon, of thy last lord;
Even monuments are silent of Belshazzar!

PRIEST.

Still must we hear it?—

BENINA.

Yea, ye must!—the words
Of God will find a voice in every wind;
The stones will speak, the marble walls cry out!

PRIEST.

Maid, in Bel's appointed bride
We must brook the words of pride;
Mortal voice may ne'er reprove
Whom the bright immortals love;
Nor hand of mortal violate
Her, the chosen immortal's mate.

BENINA.

Oh, Adonijah! sooth my mother's tears;
Be to my father what I should have been;

And now farewell! Forget not her whose thoughts,
In terror and in rapture, still will dwell
On thee: in prayer, at morn and eve, forget not
Her who will need prayers worthier than her own.

Before the House of Imlah.

IMLAH, ADONIJAH.

IMLAH.

We are here at length:—we two have glided on
Like voiceless ghosts along the crowded streets.
The miserable pour their tale of anguish
Into the happy ear, and feel sweet solace
From his compassion; but the wretched find
No comfort from imparting mutual bitterness.
I know I ought to feel that God protects
My child—I can but think that heathen arms
Have torn her from my bleeding heart! I know
I ought to kindle with the heavenly fire
Of her rapt spirit, to dauntlessness like hers.
I can but tremble for her tender loveliness,
That us'd to cling to me for its support,
Like a soft lily, for the world's rude airs
Too frail.

ADONIJAH.

Scarce dare I speak, lest I speak rashly.
I have rebuked and struggled with my sorrow,
Till I detected in my secret heart
A proud reproach, that I was born a son

Of Abraham, to be trampled in the dust
Like a base worm, that dare not turn to sting
The insulting foot.

IMLAH.

Oh cool decline of day,
That wert the captive's hour of joy, his tasks
Fulfill'd, his master's wayward pride worn out,
How wert thou wont to lead my weary foot
To such a blissful home,—I've oft forgot,
It was a captive's. Naomi, my wife,
I never fear'd to meet thy loving looks
Till now.

THE ABOVE, NAOMI.

NAOMI.

So, Imlah, thou'rt return'd :—and thou,
My son, I'll call thee.—Sweet it is t' anticipate,
And make the fond tongue thus familiar
With words that it so oft must use. Stay, stay,
Beloved! and I'll call forth, or ere ye enter,
My child, whose welcome will be sweeter to you
Than the cold babbling of her aged mother :—
I had forgot—she went abroad with you.

IMLAH.

Have mercy, Heaven!

NAOMI.

Now, whither is she gone?
To seek for thee the cup of sparkling water

With which she used to lave thy burning brow;
Or gather thee the rosy fruit, that gain'd
Fresh sweetness to thy taste, from that dear hand
That offer'd it. She ever thought—though weary
Herself and wanting food—of ministering
First to the ease and joy of those she lov'd.—
Ha! tears upon thy brow, thy noble brow,
Which I have seen endure——

IMLAH.

Go in!—no, stay
Without! I cannot venture where some mark
Of her fond duty and officious care
Will be the first thing mine eyes see.—My wife,
Why dost thou tear thine hair, and clasp thy brain?
I have not told thee——

NAOMI.

What hast thou to tell me?
Thou'rt here without her:—thou and this brave youth
Have eyes that burst with tears. She's lost!—she's dead!

IMLAH.

Would that she were!

NAOMI.

Unnatural father! wretch,
That hast no touch of human pity in thee,
To tell a mother thou canst wish her child
Where her fond arms can never fold her more!—
Oh, Imlah! Imlah! tell me—tell me all—
Ye cannot tell me more than what I fear.

IMLAH.

They tore her from us, for a paramour
For their false Gods—

NAOMI.

'Tis ever thus:—most bless'd
But to be made most wretched!

IMLAH.

Pardon her,
Oh Lord! oh, we can chide on others' lips,
What our own burn to utter!

NAOMI.

All my care,
My jealous, vigilant, and restless care,
To veil her from the eyes of man, to keep her
Like a sweet violet, that the airs of heaven
Scarcely detect in its secluded shade,
All waste and vain! I was so proud, to think
I had conceal'd our treasure from the knowledge
Of our rude masters—and I thought how envied
I should return among our barren mothers,
To Salem.

IMLAH.

Dearest! she beheld—she felt
The arm of Israel's God protecting her.
Thou canst not think with what a beauteous scorn
Our soft and timorous child o'erawed the spoiler—
How nobly she reproved our fears.

NAOMI.

Poor fool!
To be deluded by those tender arts
She ever used—her only arts—to spare
Our bleeding hearts from knowing when she suffer'd.
What! she look'd fearless, did she? She in the arms
Of sinful men, that trembled at heaven's airs,
When they came breathing o'er her blushing cheek.
And ye—thou Adonijah, that dost know
Her timorous nature, wert deceived?—cold comfort!
Have ye no better?

IMLAH.

Oh, weep! weep, my wife!
Look not upon me with those stony eyes!
Oh, think—the cup is bitter, but the Lord
May change it;—think of him that lost so many,
His sons and daughters, at their jocund feast,
All at one blow—and said—God gave, and God
Hath taken away*.

NAOMI.

Had he but one, like ours;
One that engross'd his undivided love;
One such as ne'er before blest human heart,
Would he have said so?
Wilt not tell me, too,

* Job i. 21.

How Sarah in her old age bore a child,
To be a joy within her desolate house.
Go on—go on—recount each act of love,
Each merciful miracle, that we may know
How gracious God hath been to all—but us.

IMLAH.

Hear her not, God of Israel!—oh, my son!
We must distract this frenzy, or 'twill blight
Heaven's hoped for blessings to a barren curse,
And intercept some soft descending mercy.
What shall we do?—what say?—to dissipate
Her brooding thoughts? We'll take the harps that hang
Around us, and are used to feel the hand
Of sorrow trembling on their mournful strings.
When ye demand sweet Sion's songs to mock them,
Proud strangers, our right hands forget their cunning.
But ye revenge you, wringing from our hearts
Sounds that might melt your senseless stones to pity.

HYMN.

Oh, thou that wilt not break the bruised reed,
Nor heap fresh ashes on the mourner's brow,
Nor rend anew the wounds that inly bleed,
The only balm of our afflictions thou,
Teach us to bear thy chastening wrath, oh God!
To kiss with quivering lips—still humbly kiss thy rod!

We bless thee, Lord, though far from Judah's land;
Though our worn limbs are black with stripes and chains;
Though for stern foes we till the burning sand;
And reap, for others' joy, the summer plains;
We bless thee, Lord, for thou art gracious still,
Even though this last black drop o'erflow our cup of ill!

We bless thee for our lost, our beauteous child:
The tears, less bitter, she hath made us weep;
The weary hours her graceful sports have 'guiled,
And the dull cares her voice hath sung to sleep!
She was the dove of hope to our lorn ark;
The only star that made the strangers' sky less dark!

Our dove has fall'n into the spoiler's net;
Rude hands defile her plumes, so chastely white;
To the bereaved their one soft star is set,
And all above is sullen, cheerless night!
But still we thank thee for our transient bliss—
Yet, Lord, to scourge our sins remain'd no way but this?

As when our Father to Mount Moriah led
The blessing's heir, his age's hope and joy,
Pleased, as he roam'd along with dancing tread,
Chid his slow sire, the fond, officious boy,
And laugh'd in sport to see the yellow fire
Climb up the turf-built shrine, his destined funeral pyre—

Even thus our joyous child went lightly on;
Bashfully sportive, timorously gay,
Her white foot bounded from the pavement stone
Like some light bird from off the quivering spray;
And back she glanced, and smiled, in blameless glee,
The cars, and helms, and spears, and mystic dance to see.

By thee, oh Lord, the gracious voice was sent
That bade the Sire his murderous task forego;
When to his home the child of Abraham went
His mother's tears had scarce begun to flow.
Alas! and lurks there, in the thicket's shade,
The victim to replace our lost, devoted maid?

Lord, even through thee to hope were now too bold;
Yet 'twere to doubt thy mercy to despair.
'Tis anguish, yet 'tis comfort, faint and cold,
To think how sad we are, how blest we were!
To speak of her is wretchedness, and yet
It were a grief more deep and bitterer to forget!

Oh Lord our God! why was she e'er our own?
Why is she not our own—our treasure still?
We could have pass'd our heavy years alone.
Alas! is this to bow us to thy will?
Ah, even our humblest prayers we make repine,
Nor, prostrate thus on earth, our hearts to thee resign.

Forgive, forgive—even should our full hearts break;
The broken heart thou wilt not, Lord, despise:
Ah! thou art still too gracious to forsake,
Though thy strong hand so heavily chastise.
Hear all our prayers, hear not our murmurs, Lord;
And, though our lips rebel, still make thyself ador'd.

*The Front of the Temple**.

PRIESTS WITHIN.

Hark! what dancing footsteps fall
Light before the Temple wall?
Who are ye that seek to pass
Through the burnish'd gate of brass?
Come ye with the gifts of Kings,
With the peacock's bright-eyed wings?
With the myrrh and fragrant spice?
With the spotless sacrifice?

* Herodotus states that the Temple of the Babylonian Jupiter was standing in his days. In the midst of it was a tower, a stadium (about a furlong) in length and breadth; upon this rose a second tower, and above that another, to the number of eight. The ascent wound in a circle round all the towers. In the middle of the ascent were seats and resting places, where those ascending might repose. In the last tower was a large shrine, and within the shrine, a richly strewn couch and a golden table. There was no statue within the shrine, nor did any man pass the night there, but only one of the native women, whichever the God might choose. So say the Chaldeans who are the Priests of the God.—*Clio*. clxxi.

I have interposed mere resting places, and assigned each tower to some particular purpose.

With the spoils of conquer'd lands?
With the works of maidens' hands,
O'er the glittering loom that run,
Underneath the orient sun?
Bring ye pearl, or choicest gem,
From a plunder'd diadem?
Ivory wand, or ebony
From the sable Indian tree?
Purple from the Tyrian shore;
Amber cup, or coral store,
From the branching trees that grow
Under the salt sea-water's flow?

PRIESTS, WITH BENINA.

With a fairer gift we come
To the God's majestic home
Than the pearls the rich shells weep
In the Erythrean deep.
All our store of ebony
Sparkles in her radiant eye.
Whiter far her spotless skin
Than the gauzy vestures thin,
Bleach'd upon the shores of Nile;
Grows around no palmy isle
Coral like her swelling lips,
Whence the gale its sweetness sips,
That upon the spice-tree blown
Seems a fragrance all its own;

Never yet so fair a maid
On the bridal couch was laid;
Never form beseem'd so well
The immortal arms of Bel.

PRIESTS, LEADING HER IN.

Mid the dashing fountains cool,
In the marble vestibule,
Where the orange branches play,
Freshen'd by the silver spray,
Heaven-led virgin, take thy rest,
While we bear the silken vest
And the purple robe of pride
Meet for Bel's expected bride.

ALL THE PRIESTS.

Bridelike now she stands array'd!
Welcome, welcome, dark-hair'd maid!
Lead her in, with dancing feet,
Lead her in, with music sweet,
With the cymbals glancing round,
And the hautboy's silver sound.
See the golden gates expand,
And the Priests, on either hand,
On their faces prone they fall
Entering the refulgent Hall.
With the tread that suits thy state,
Glowing cheek, and look elate,

With thine high unbending brow,
Sacred maiden, enter thou.

FIRST PRIEST.

Chosen of Bel, thou stand'st within the Temple,
Within the first and lowest of our Halls,
Yet not least sumptuous. On the jasper pavement,
Each in his deep alcove, Chaldea's Kings
Stand on their carved pedestals. Behold them!
Their marble brows still wear the conscious awe
Of sovereignty—the mightiest of the dead,
As of the living. Eminent, in the centre,
The golden statue stands of Nabonassar,
That in the plain of Dura, to the sound
Of harp, and lute, and dulcimer, received
The homage of the world*. The Scythian hills,
The margin of the Syrian sea, the Isles
Of Ocean, their adoring tribes cast down;
And the high sun, at noonday, saw no face
Of all mankind turned upward from the dust,
Save the imperial brow of Nabonassar,
That rose in lonely loftiness, as now
Yon awe-crown'd image.

BENINA.

Have ye wrought him, too,

* It does not appear certain what this statue was, which Nebuchadnezzar erected on the plain of Dura. I have taken the poetic licence of supposing it to be his own.

As when he prowl'd the plain, th' associate
Of the brute herd that browsed around, nor own'd
The dread of a superior presence, beat
By the uncourtly rains and wintry winds
Upon the undiadem'd head?

PRIEST.

Cease, cease, nor tempt
The loving patience of the God too far!
Advance; and wind along the aspiring stair.

PRIESTS.

Haste! the fading light of day
Scarce will gild our lofty way.
Haste, nor tremble, tender maid!
To the sculptured balustrade
Cling not thus with snowy hand;
None but slaves around thee stand,
On thy footsteps proud to wait:
Hark! the slow-recoiling gate
Opens at our trumpets' call;
Enter, now, our second Hall.

SECOND PRIEST.

Well mayest thou hold thine alabaster hand,
Through which the rosy light so softly shines,
Before thine eyes, oh! maiden, as thou enterest
The Chamber of the Tribute. Here thou seest
The wealth of all the subject world, piled up

In order—from its multitude that seems
Confusion: in each deep, receding vault,
O'er all the spacious pavement, 'tis the same;
The flaming gold, and ivory, and the gems—
If all mankind were Kings, enough to crown
Each brow with an imperial diadem!

BENINA.

Oh! rapt Isaiah, were they not thy words—
How hath she ceased—the golden city ceased!
Will all that wealth but ransom thee an hour,
Or bribe the impartial and undazzled Ruin
One instant to suspend its swooping wing?

PRIESTS.

Breathe again the clear blue air:
Mount again the marble stair:
Still we mount—on high—on high,
To the exulting harmony!
Hark! the strain of triumph rings
In the Hall of Captive Kings.

THIRD PRIEST.

Now pause again: yon chained images
Are those that ruled the world, or ere the Lord
Of great Chaldea took the all-ruling sceptre
Into his iron hand, and laid the pride
Of all the kingdoms prostrate at his feet

BENINA.

Oh! King of Judah, thou art there! Thy foes,
In charitable cruelty, did quench
Thy sightless eyes, lest thou should'st see the dwelling
Which thou had'st changed for Sion's beauteous hill;
Lest thou should'st more than hear thy sorrowing people
Doom'd by thy sins, and by their own, to bondage.
Thou, Zedekiah*, did'st desert thy God,
And wert of God deserted;—nor to thee
Is given, withdrawn into a foreign grave,
To feel again soft Canaan's fragrant gales
On thy blind brow, almost persuading thee
That, in thy darkness, thou canst still behold
Some once-lov'd spot, or dim-remember'd scene.
The glad deliverance that comes to Judah
Comes not to thee. Alas! to sad Benina,
Oh, gracious God of Abraham, will it come?

PRIESTS.

Maid, again we lift the song;
Thy soft feet have rested long;
Nearer, nearer, as we climb
To the highest Hall sublime,
Bride of the Immortal, thee
All the city throngs to see,
Floating, like a snowy dove,
In the azure clouds above.

* Zedekiah, carried away at the last and final desolation of Jerusalem.

Lo! the fourth of our abodes,
Chamber of the captive Gods!

BENINA.

Oh, Lord of Hosts! I dare not gaze around me,
Lest in yon heaps of monstrous forms uncouth
The scaly Dagon, and the brute Osiris,
Moon-crown'd Astarte, or the Sun-like Mithra,
Some shape I should behold by the blind Gentile
Held worthy to enclose th' Illimitable
That fills the Heaven and Earth. The Cherubim,
Perchance, are here, behind whose golden wings
Thy fiery presence dwelt, but dwells no more.
I know that danger waits me on yon height,
But hither haste I rather than behold
Profaning Heathens scorn what thou hast glorified.
Lead on——

PRIESTS.

Half thy journey now is past;
Who shall wonder at thine haste:—
Dost not wish for wings to fly
To thy blissful destiny?
Yet, oh tread with footstep light
As the falling dews of night;
Like the gliding serpent creep
Where the gifted Dreamers sleep;
Fold thou close thy fluttering dress,
Even thy panting breath suppress,

Lest some glorious dream we break :—
Lo! 'tis vain—they move—they wake!

THE DREAMERS.

Hark! hark! the foot—we hear the trembling foot,
With motion like the dying wind upon a silver lute:
Upon our sleep it came, as soft itself as sleep;
It shone upon our visions like a star upon the deep.

Lo! lo! the form, the graceful form we see
That seem'd, through all the live-long night, before our eyes to be:
Above, the eyes of sparkling jet, the brow like marble fair;
And down, and o'er the snowy breast, the dark and wandering hair.

Hark! hark! the song—we hear the bridal song—
Amid the listening stars it flows the sounding heavens along!
It follows the Immortal down from his empyreal sky,
Descending to his mortal bride in full divinity!

BENINA.

What! are your dreams so soft; and saw ye nought
Of midnight flames, that clomb the palace walls,
And ran along the terrace colonnades,
And pour'd the liquid walls in torrent flames
Of dark asphaltus?—Heard ye not the wail

Of wounded men, and shrieks of flying women;
And the carv'd Gods dash'd down in cumbrous ruin
On their own shrines?

PRIESTS.

Great Bel avert the omen!

PRIESTS.

Hurry on, nor more delay;
Shadows darken on our way;
Only in the hall we tread;
Ask of those the stars that read,
Catching every influence
Their all-ruling orbs dispense.
From those silent Prophets bright
That adorn the vault of night,
Watchers of the starry sky,
Know ye, feel ye, who is nigh?

ASTROLOGERS.

What planet rolls its pearly car,
What orb of mild or angry hue?
The star of love, the silver star,
Glides lonely through yon depth of blue.
We see her sailing motion calm;
We hear the music of her sound;
We drink Mylitta's * breathing balm,
In odorous clouds distill'd around.

* The Assyrian Venus.—*Herod.*

And calm, and musical and sweet
Is she that star's mild influence leads—
The maid that, with her snowy feet,
Even now the sacred pavement treads.

BENINA.

Enough of this! Oh! chaste and quiet stars,
And pure, as all things from infecting Earth
Remov'd, and near the throne of God; whose calm
And beautiful obedience to the laws
Of your great Maker is a mute reproach
To the unruly courses of this world,
Would they debase you to the ministers
And guilty favourers of their sinful purpose?

PRIESTS.

Now our toil is all but done;
Now the height is all but won;
By the High Priest's lonely seat,
By Kalassan's still retreat,
Where, in many a brazen fold,
The slumbering Dragon lies outroll'd,
Pass we on, nor pause. And thou
Gaze not, Priest, with wondering brow!
Lovelier though her cheek appears
For her toil and for her tears;
And the bosom's vest beneath
Heaves the quick and panting breath.

KALASSAN.

More beautiful ne'er trod our marble stairs!

PRIESTS.

None!—but still the maid dismiss
To her place of destined bliss:—
That no mortal eye may see—
On! we may not follow thee:
Only with our music sweet
We pursue thy mounting feet.
Now, upon the topmost height,
Thou art lost to mortal sight!
Lo! the couch beside thee spread,
Where the Heaven-loved maids are wed.
Till the bridal midnight deep
Bow thy head in balmy sleep—
Sleep that shall be sweetly broken
When the God his bride hath woken.

BENINA.

Alone! alone upon this giddy height!
Yet, better thus than by that frantic rout
Encircled: yet a while, and I shall breathe
With freedom. Oh! thou cool, delicious silence,
How grateful art thou to the ears that ring
With that wild music's turbulent dissonance!
By slow degrees the starlight face of things
Grows clear around my misty, swimming eyes.

Oh, Babylon! how art thou spread beneath me!
As some wide plain, with rich pavilions set
Mid the dark umbrage of a summer grove.
Like a small rivulet, that from bank to bank
Is ruffled by the sailing cygnet's breast,
Euphrates seems to wind. Oh! thou vast city,
Thus dwindled to our human sight, what art thou
To Him that from his throne, above the skies,
Beyond the circuit of the golden Sun,
Views all the subject world!
The parting day
To twilight and the few faint early stars
Hath left the city. On yon western lake
A momentary gleam is lingering still.
Thou'rt purpling now, oh Sun, the vines of Canaan,
And crowning, with rich light, the cedar top
Of Lebanon, where——but oh! without their daughter—
Soon my sad parents shall return. Where are ye,
Beloved? I seek in vain the lonely light
Of our dear cabin on Euphrates' side,
Amid yon kindling fires. And have ye quenched it,
That all your dwelling be as darkly sad
As are your childless hearts?—And thou—mine own,
I thought this morn, and called thee—Adonijah,
Art thou, too, thinking of that hour like this;
The balmy, tranquil, and scarce starlight hour,
When the soft Moon had sent her harbinger,
Pale Silence, to foreshow her coming presence;

To hush the winds, and smooth the clouds before her?—
That hour, that, with delicious treachery, stole
The secret from Benina's lips she longed
From her full heart t' unburthen? Better, now,
Had it been buried in eternal darkness,
Than thus have kindled hopes that shone so softly—
Were quench'd so soon, so utterly.—
Fond heart,
These soft, desponding, yet delightful thoughts,
Must not dissolve thee to mistrust of Him
That fill'd thee as with fire, and touched thy lips
With holy scorn of all the wealth and pride
That blazed around thy path. Even now I feel
My trembling foot more firm; and, like the eagle's,
Mine eyes familiar with their cloudy height——
What 's here?—a hurried tread——
What art thou? speak!

KALASSAN.

The honour'd of the God that honours thee.
Oh, miracle of beauty! I beheld thee,
And strove with my impatient spirit within
To wait th' appointed hour;—but, as the pilgrim
Sees the white fountain in the palmy shade,
Nor brooks delay, even thus my thirsty eyes
Demand their instant feast.

BENINA.

Thou should'st have brought

The sage Diviners to unfold the meaning
Of this dark language.

KALASSAN.

Loveliest bashfulness!
Or is it but the sportive ignorance
That laughs beneath the dark and glittering eyelids,
At the delighted dupe of its dissembling?

BENINA.

Peace, and avaunt!

KALASSAN.

O maid! who art so beauteous
That yon bright moon is rising, all in haste,
To gaze on thee, or to display thy grace
To him, that, lost in wonder, scarce hath melted
To love.
The snowy light falls where she treads,
As 'twere a sacred place! in her loose locks
It wanders, even as with a sense of pleasure!
And trembles on her bosom, that hath caught
Its gentle restlessness, and trembles, too,
Harmonious.

BENINA.

Must mine ears endure thee still?

KALASSAN.

And know'st thou not why thou art here; what bliss,
What bridal rapture waits thee?

BENINA.

There are sins

Whose very dread infects the virgin's soul,
Tainting the fountain of her secret thoughts;
I'm here to suffer evil—what, I know not,
But will remain in holy ignorance,
Till my dark hour of trial.

KALASSAN.

Hast thou never,
Soft maid, when fervid noon bathes all the world
In silence, in thy fond and wandering thoughts,
Beheld a noble bridegroom seated near thee,
And heard him, 'mid sweet falls of marriage-music,
Whispering what made thy pale cheek burn?

BENINA.

Away!—
And must he see my tears? and think me weak,
And of my God abandon'd?

KALASSAN.

Lo! the couch
Bestrewn with flowers, whose fragrance and whose hues
Shall not have faded, till great Bel come down
Beneath that dimly canopied alcove——

BENINA.

There's that within thy words I ought to fear:
But it should seem, that with the earth I've left
All earthly fears beneath me. I defy
Thee and thy Gods alike.

KALASSAN.

Alike in truth;

For sometimes doth the Mightiest not disdain
To veil his glories in a mortal shape,
Even great Kalassan's. Look on me, and say
If he could choose a nobler.

BENINA.

What! and fear'st not
Thine own false Gods—thou worse than Idol worshipper?
Why even the senseless wood and stone might wake
To indignation, and their fiery vengeance
Break forth from Heaven. Alas! and what have they,
Whose name thou dost usurp to cloke thy sin,
To do with Heaven more than thy loathsome self?

KALASSAN.

Thine eyes, albeit so full of scorn, survey not
My form in vain. I tell thee, Maid, I tread
This earth so conscious that the best of Deity,
The power and majesty, reside within me,
That I but stoop to win myself a bride
Beneath another name: here 'mid the clouds
I stand, as in mine own appropriate place.

BENINA.

The darkest pit of Tophet were too light
For thine offence.

KALASSAN.

Oh! sóft and musical voice,
Art thou so lavish of injurious words?
Erewhile thou 'lt be as prodigal of fondness.

So now prepare thee: ere two hours are past
Thou wedd'st Kalassan, or Kalassan's God,
Or both, or either, which thou wilt. Farewell
A little while: but I beseech thee, wear
When I return this soft becoming pride;
Nor imitate, as yet, the amorous slaves
Who weary with officious tenderness.
Be as thou seem'st, a kindred spirit with mine,
And we will mate like eagles in the Heavens,
And give our children an immortal heritage
To bathe their plumage in the fiery sun.

BENINA (*alone*).

Did the earth bear thee, monster! or art thou
Th' Eternal Enemy in the human shape?
Oh! 'tis the innocent's best security,
That the unrighteous pluck the thunderbolt
With such resistless violence on their heads.
Lord of the insulted Heavens! thou canst not strike
This impious man without delivering me;
Me, else unworthy of thy gracious mercy.
But lo! what blaze of light beneath me spreads
O'er the wide city. Like yon galaxy
Above mine head, each long and spacious street
Becomes a line of silver light, the trees
In all their silent avenues break out
In flowers of fire. But chief around the Palace
Whitens the glowing splendor; every court
That lay in misty dimness indistinct,

Is traced by pillars and high architraves
Of crystal lamps that tremble in the wind:
Each portal arch gleams like an earthly rainbow,
And o'er the front spreads one entablature
Of living gems of every hue, so bright
That the pale Moon, in virgin modesty,
Retreating from the dazzling and the tumult,
Afar upon the distant plain reposes
Her unambitious beams, or on the bosom
Of the blue river, ere it laves the walls.
Hark! too, the sounds of revelry and song
Upon the pinions of the breeze come up
Even to this height. No eye is closed in sleep;
None in vast Babylon but wakes to joy—
None—none is sad and desolate but I.
Yet over all, I know not whence or how,
A dim oppression loads the air, and sounds
As of vast wings do somewhere seem to brood
And hover on the winds; and I that most
Should tremble for myself, the appointed prey
Of sin, am bow'd, as with enforced compassion,
To think on sorrows not mine own, to weep
O'er those whose laughter and whose song upbraid
My prodigality of mis-spent pity.
I will go rest, if rest it may be call'd—
Not, Adonijah—not to think of thee.
Oh, bear a brief unwilling banishment
From thine own home, my heart; I cannot cope
With thy subduing image, and be strong.

CHORUS OF BABYLONIANS BEFORE THE PALACE.

Awake! awake! put on thy garb of pride,
Array thee like a sumptuous royal bride,
O festal Babylon!
Lady, whose ivory throne
Is by the side of many azure waters!
In floating dance, like birds upon the wing,
Send tinkling forth thy silver-sandal'd daughters;
Send in the solemn march,
Beneath each portal arch,
Thy rich-robed lords to crowd the banquet of their King.

They come! they come from both the illumined shores;
Down each long street the festive tumult pours;
Along the waters dark
Shoots many a gleaming bark,
Like stars along the midnight welkin flashing,
And galleys, with their masts enwreath'd with light,
From their quick oars the kindling waters dashing;
In one long moving line
Along the bridge they shine,
And with their glad disturbance wake the peaceful night.

Hang forth, hang forth, in all your avenues,
The arching lamps of more than rainbow hues,
Oh! gardens of delight!
With the cool airs of night
Are lightly waved your silver-foliaged trees,

The deep-embower'd yet glowing blaze prolong
Height above height the lofty terraces;
Seeing this new day-break,
The nestling birds awake,
The nightingale hath hush'd her sweet untimely song.

Lift up, lift up your golden-valved doors,
Spread to the glittering dance your marble floors,
Palace! whose spacious halls,
And far-receding walls,
Are hung with purple like the morning skies;
And all the living luxuries of sound
Pour from the long out-stretching galleries;
Down every colonnade
The sumptuous board is laid,
With golden cups and lamps and bossy chargers crown'd.

They haste, they haste! the high-crown'd Rulers stand,
Each with his sceptre in his kingly hand;
The bearded Elders sage,
Though pale with thought and age;
Those through whose bounteous and unfailing hands
The tributary streams of treasure flow
From the rich bounds of earth's remotest lands;
All, but the pomp and pride
Of battle, laid aside,
Chaldea's Captains stand in many a glittering row.

They glide, they glide! each, like an antelope,
Bounding in beauty on a sunny slope,
With full and speaking eyes,
And graceful necks that rise
O'er snowy bosoms in their emulous pride,
The chosen of earth's choicest loveliness;
Some with the veil thrown timidly aside,
Some boastful and elate
In their majestic state
Whose bridal bed Belshazzar's self hath deign'd to bless.

Come forth! come forth! and crown the peerless feast,
Thou whose high birthright was the effulgent east!
On th' ivory seat alone,
Monarch of Babylon!
Survey the interminable wilderness
Of splendor, stretching far beyond the sight;
Nought but thy presence wants there now to bless;
The music waits for thee,
Its fount of harmony,
Transcending glory thou of this thrice glorious night!

Behold! behold! each gem-crown'd forehead proud
And every plume and crested helm is bow'd,
Each high-arch'd vault along
Breaks out the blaze of song,
Belshazzar comes! nor Bel, when he returns

From riding on his stormy thunder-cloud,
To where his bright celestial palace burns,
Alights with loftier tread,
More full of stately dread,
While under his fix'd feet the loaded skies are bow'd.

The Hall of Banquet.

CHORUS.

Mightiest of the sons of man!
The lion in his forest lair,
The eagle in the fields of air,
Amid the tumbling waves Leviathan,
In power without or peer or mate,
Hold their inviolable state:
Alone Belshazzar stands on earth,
Pre-eminent o'er all of human birth,
Mightiest of the sons of man!

Richest of the sons of man!
For thee the mountains teem with gold,
The spicy groves their bloom unfold,
The bird of beauty bears its feathery fan,
And amber paves the yellow seas,
And spread the branching coral trees,
Nor shrouds the mine its deepest gem,
Ambitious to adorn Belshazzar's diadem,
Richest of the sons of man!

Fairest of the sons of man!
Tall as the cedar towers thine head,
And fleet and terrible thy tread,
As the strong coursers' in the battle's van;
An Eden blooms upon thy face;
Like music, thy majestic grace
Holds the mute gazer's breath suppress'd,
And makes a tumult in the wondering breast,
Fairest of the sons of man!

Noblest of the sons of man!
The first a kingly rule that won,
Wide as the journey of the sun,
From Nimrod thine high-sceptred race began;
And gathering splendor still, went down
From sire to son the eternal crown,
Till full on great Belshazzar's crest
Its high meridian glory shone confest,—
Noblest of the sons of man!

Happiest of the sons of man!
In wine, in revel, and in joy
Was softly nursed the imperial boy;
His golden years, like Indian rivers, ran,
And each more rapturous hour surpast
The glowing rapture of the last,
Even till the plenitude of bliss
Did overflow and centre all in this,
Happiest of the sons of man!

SABARIS.

Peace! peace! the king vouchsafes his gracious speech.
Sit ye like statues silent! ye have quaff'd
The liquid gladness of the blood-red wine,
And ye have eaten of the golden fruits
That the sun ripens but for kingly lips,
And now ye are about to feast your ears
With great Belshazzar's voice.

ARIOCH.

The crowded hall
Suspense, and prescient of the coming joy,
Is silent as the cloudless summer skies.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh ye, assembled Babylon! fair youths
And hoary Elders, Warriors, Councillors,
And bright-eyed Women, down my festal board
Reclining! oh ye thousand living men,
Do ye not hold your charter'd breath from me?
And I can plunge your souls in wine and joy;
Or by a word, a look, dismiss you all
To darkness and to shame: yet, are ye not
Proud of the slavery that thus enthrals you?
What king, what ruler over subject man
Or was, or is, or shall be like Belshazzar?
I summon from their graves the sceptred dead
Of elder days, to see their shame. I cry
Unto the cloudy Past, unfold the thrones
That glorified the younger world: I call

To the dim Future—lift thy veil and show
The destined lords of humankind: they rise,
They bow their veil'd heads to the dust, and own
The throne whereon Chaldea's Monarch sits
The height and pinnacle of human glory.
Oh ancient cities, o'er whose streets the grass
Is green, whose name hath wither'd from the face
Of earth! Oh ye by rich o'erflowing Nile,
Memphis, and hundred-gated Thebes—and thou,
Assyrian Nineveh, and ye golden towers
That redden o'er the Indian streams, what are ye
To Babylon—Eternal Babylon!
That's girt with bulwarks strong as adamant,
O'er whom Euphrates' restless waves keep watch,
That, like the high and everlasting Heavens,
Grows old, yet not less glorious? Yes, to you
I turn, oh azure-curtain'd palaces!
Whose lamps are stars, whose music, the sweet motion
Of your own spheres, in whom the banqueters
Are Gods, nor fear my Babylonian halls
Even with your splendors to compare.
Bring wine!
I see your souls are jocund as mine own;
Pour in yon vessels of the Hebrews' God
Belshazzar's beverage—pour it high. Hear, earth!
Hear, Heaven! my proud defiance!——Oh, what man,
What God——

[*The hand appears upon the wall, slowly tracing the characters, which burst out into flame.*

SABARIS, AND MANY VOICES.

The king! the king! look to the king!

ARIOCH.

Where? I can see nor king nor people—nothing
But a bewildering, red, and gloom-like light
That swallows up the fiery canopy
Of lamps.

SABARIS.

Hath blindness smitten thee?

ARIOCH.

I know not;
But all things swim around me in a darkness
That dazzles——

SABARIS.

See, his shuddering joints are loosen'd,
And his knees smite each other: such a face
Is seen in tombs:—what means it?

ARIOCH.

See'st not thou
That taunted'st me but now—upon the wall—
There—there—it moves——

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh dark and bodiless hand,
What art thou—thus upon my palace wall
Gliding in shadowy, slow, gigantic blackness?
Lo! fiery letters, where it moves, break out:
'Tis there—'tis gone:—'tis there again—no, nought
But those strange characters of flame, that burn

Upon the unkindled wall:—I cannot read them—
Can ye?
I see your quivering lips that speak not—
Sabaris—Arioch—Captains—Elders—all
As pale and horror-stricken as myself!
Are there no wiser? Call ye forth the Dreamers,
And those that read the stars, and every priest;
And he that shall interpret best shall wear
The scarlet robe and chain of gold, and sit
Third ruler of my realm. Away!—No—leave me not
To gaze alone;—alone, on those pale signs
Of destiny—the unextinguishable,
The indelible——Strew, strew my couch where best
I may behold what sears my burning eyeballs
To gaze on—and the cold blood round my heart
To stand, like snow. No—ache mine eyes, and quiver
My palsied limbs—I cannot turn away—
Here am I bound as by a thrice linked brass,
Here, till the burthen of mine ignorance
Be from my loaded soul taken off, in silence
Deep as the midnight round a place of tombs.

The Summit of the Temple.

BENINA.

How long, O Lord! how long must I endure
This restlessness of danger?—I have wish'd
That even the worst were come, I am so sick

And weary with suspense: I have sate and gazed
Upon the silent moon, as she pursued
Her journey to yon blue celestial height.
Pilgrim of Heaven! the white translucent clouds,
Through which she wanders, fall away, nor leave
A taint upon her spotless orb: Shall I,
O Lord! emerge in purity as stainless
From the dark clouds that dim mine earthly course?
And sometimes as a whispering sound came up,
Though but the voice of some light-breathing wind
Along the stair, I felt my trembling heart,
And I grew guilty of a timorous doubt
In Him, whose guardian hand is o'er me.
Hark!
Hark! all around—above—beneath—it bursts,
The long deep roll of——in yon cloudless skies—
It cannot be God's thunder; and the fires,
Blue as the sulphurous lightning, rise from earth,
Not Heaven. Oh madly impious! dare ye thus
Mimic the all-destroying arms that rage
Against the guilty? the vast temple shakes,
And all the clouded atmosphere is red
With the hell-born tempest—like to rushing chariots
Upon a stony way, like some vast forest
Ablaze with a heaven-kindled conflagration,
It comes, it comes—as in a tent of clouds,
Rent at each moment by the flashing light,
The gloom rolls back—it bursts. Speak!—who art thou,

Whose robes are woven as from the starry Heavens?
What means that sceptre, and the wreaths, like mist,
That turban thy dusk brow?—I know thee now—
I see it grow into a hideous likeness—
Kalassan!

KALASSAN.

Oh most sweet humility,
That doth disdain the modest palliation
Of being a Deity's enforced bride;
Her fond detection pierces every veil,
And springs in raptures to her mortal lover.

BENINA.

Oh can I wonder that thou dost belie
The innocent helpless virgin, when thy falsehood
Aspires with frantic blasphemy t' attaint
The immaculate heavens?

KALASSAN.

Roll on! I say,—roll on
My bridal music! the ear-stunning tambour—
Blaze forth my marriage fires!

BENINA.

Avaunt!—My cries——

KALASSAN.

Thy cries! Thou might'st as well, on Taurus' brow,
Call to the shipman on the Caspian Sea!
See'st thou how far thou art from earth?

BENINA.

See'st thou
How near to Heaven?

KALASSAN.

To Heaven! behold, the stars
Pierce not the cool pavilion, where soft Darkness,
Our handmaid, hangs her nuptial canopy,
At times illumin'd by the flashing light
That loves to linger on thy kindling beauty.

BENINA.

'Tis as he says!—nor sound, nor gleam of succour——
Thy bride—oh, Adonijah!—ah, no bride
Of thine!—lost—lost to thee—would 'twere by death!
Is 't for the sin of loving thee too fondly
I am deserted!—Spare me, Man of Terror,
And prayers for thee (they say, God loves the prayers
Of the undefiled) shall rise as constantly
As summer-dews at eve.

KALASSAN.

Now louder! louder!
Let there be triumph in your martial sounds.

BENINA.

Oh God! oh God! I have condemn'd myself,
And fallen from the faith. Ah, not for me!
For thine own glory suffer not the Heathen
To boast of——Ha!—all silence, and all gloom—
I tremble—but he trembles too——

KALASSAN.

With wrath!
Slaves! wherefore have ye quench'd mine earthly light,
And still'd my storm?

VOICE BELOW.

Kalassan!

KALASSAN.

Slaves!

VOICE.

Kalassan!

BENINA.

Thou'rt call'd——

VOICE.

Kalassan! to Belshazzar's presence
We are summon'd:—Priest, Diviner, Seer, thyself;—
If thou delay'st, stern Arioch's sword must sever
The disobedient head!

BENINA.

With tears, not words,
I bless thee, Lord!

KALASSAN.

Is this thy God?

BENINA.

My God,
In his omnipotence, doth make the wrath
Of hurricanes and desolating fires
His ministers—why not the breath of Kings?

KALASSAN.

The hour will come in which to tame thy scorn!

BENINA.

The hour is come that frees me from thy presence:
Haste, haste——

VOICE.

Kalassan!

KALASSAN.

Slaves! I come.

BENINA.

Away!

MANY VOICES.

Kalassan!

BENINA.

Hark! they wait, they call, they threaten!
Down! down! away or perish!

KALASSAN.

Fare thee well
Till I return.

BENINA.

Till thou return'st—He's gone!
I did not think that I could hear his tread,
His angry tread, with such a deep delight.
Oh! my fond parents! when we meet again,
We shall not meet with strange, averted looks:
Ye will not, in sad pity, take me back
A shamed and blighted child to your cold bosoms.
And thou, betroth'd, belov'd—I shall endure
To stand before thy face, nor wish the earth
To shroud me from thine unreproaching gaze;
For were I all I fear'd, thou hadst ne'er reproach'd me;
And oh, sweet Siloe! oh, my Father's land!
Land where the feet may wander where they will—

Land where the heart may love without a fear!
I feel that I shall tread thee; for the Lord
Pours not his mercies in a sparing measure.
This is the earnest of his love—the seal
With which he marks us for his own, his blest,
His ransom'd! Oh! fair Zion, lift thou up
Thy crown, that glitters to the morning Sun!
They come—thy lost, thy banish'd children come—
Thy ruin'd streets rise up to sounds of music!

The Hall of Banquet, with the Fiery Letters on the Wall.

ARIOCH.

Hath the King spoken?

SABARIS.

Not a word: as now,
He hath sate, with eyes that strive to grow familiar
With those red characters of fire: but still
The agony of terror hath not pass'd
From his chill frame. But, if a word, a step,
A motion, from those multitudes reclined
Down each long festal board, the bursting string
Of some shrill instrument, or even the wind,
Whispering amid the plumes and shaking lamps,
Disturb him—by some mute, imperious gesture,
Or by his brow's stern anger, he commands
All the vast Halls to silence.

ARIOCH.

Peace! he hears
Our murmur'd speech.

SABARIS.

No.

ARIOCH.

Did ye not observe him,
When his hand fell upon the all-ruling sceptre,
The bitter and self-mocking laugh that pass'd
O'er his pale cheek?

SABARIS.

His lips move, but he speaks not!
All still again——

ARIOCH.

They are here:—The Priests and Seers;
Their snowy garments sweep the Hall.

SABARIS.

Behold!
He motions them to advance and to retreat
At once—and pants, yet shudders, to demand
Their answer.

BELSHAZZAR.

Oh! Chaldea's worshipp'd Sages—
Oh! men of wisdom, that have pass'd your years—
Your long, and quiet, solitary years,
In tracing the dim sources of th' events
That agitate this world of man—oh! ye
That in the tongues of every clime discourse;

Ye that hold converse with the eternal stars,
And, in their calm prophetic courses, read
The destinies of empires; ye whose dreams
Are throng'd with the predestined images
Of things that are to be; to whom the Fates
Unfold their secret councils; to whose sight
The darkness of Futurity withdraws,
And one vast Present fills all Time—behold
Yon burning characters! and read, and say
Why the dark Destinies have hung their sentence
Thus visible to the sight, but to the mind
Unsearchable?—Ye have heard the rich reward;
And I but wait to see whose neck shall wear
The chain of glory——
Ha! each pale fallen lip
Voiceless! and each upon the other turns
His wan and questioning looks.——Kalassan! thou
Art like the rest, and gazest on thy fellows
In blank and sullen ignorance.—Spurn them forth!
Ye wise! ye learned! ye with Fate's mysteries
Entrusted! Spurn, I say, and trample on them!
Let them be outcast to the scorn of slaves!
Let children pluck their beards, and every voice
Hoot at them as they pass!
Despair! Despair!
This is thy palace now! No throne, no couch
Beseems the King, whose doom is on his walls
Emblazed—yet whose vast empire finds not one

Whose faithful love can show its mystic import!
Low on the dust, upon the pavement-stone,
Belshazzar takes his rest!—Ye hosts of slaves,
Behold your King! the Lord of Babylon!—
Speak not—for he that speaks, in other words
But to expound those fiery characters,
Shall ne'er speak more!

NITOCRIS (*entering*).

As thou did'st give command,
My son, I'm here to see the all-glorious feast
That shames the earth, and copes with Heaven!
Great Powers!
Is't thus? Oh! look not with that mute reproach,
More terrible than anger, on thy mother!
Oh, pardon my rash taunts!—my son! my son!
Thou art but now the beauteous, smiling child,
That from my bosom drank the flowing life;
By whom I've pass'd so many sleepless nights
In deeper joy than slumber e'er could give!
The sole refreshment of my weary spirit
To gaze on thee!—Alas! 'twas all my crime:—
I gave to thy young lips the mantling cup
Of luxury and pride; I taught thee first
That the wide earth was made for thee, and man
Born for thy uses!

BELSHAZZAR.

Find me who will read it,

And thou wilt give me, then, a life more precious
Than that I once received of thee.

NITOCRIS.

'Twas he;
I saw him as I pass'd along the courts,
The Hebrew, who when visions of the night
Shook the imperial soul of Nabonassar,
Like one to whom the dimly-peopled realms
Of sleep were clear as the bright noontide Heavens,
Spake——

BELSHAZZAR.

With the speed of lightning call him hither,
No more, my mother—till he comes, no more.

A long silent pause.

ARIOCH.

King of the world, he 's here.

BELSHAZZAR.

Not yet! not yet!
Delay him! hold him back!—My soul 's not strung
To the dire knowledge.
Up the voiceless hall
He moves; nor doth the white and ashen fear,
That paints all faces, change one line of his.
Audacious slave! walks he erect and firm,
When kings are groveling on the earth?—Give place!
Why do ye crowd around him? Back! I say.
Is your king heard—or hath he ceased to rule?

NITOCRIS.

Alas! my son, fear levels kings and slaves.

BELSHAZZAR.

Art thou that Daniel of the Hebrew race,
In whom the excellence of wisdom dwells
As in the Gods? I have heard thy fame:—behold
Yon mystic letters, flaming on the wall,
That, in the darkness of their fateful import,
Baffle the wisest of Chaldea's sages!
Read, and interpret; and the satrap robe
Of scarlet shall invest thy limbs; the chain
Of gold adorn thy neck; and all the world
Own thee third ruler of Chaldea's realm!

DANIEL.

Belshazzar, be thy gifts unto thyself,
And thy rewards to others. I, the servant
Of God, will read God's writing to the King.
The Lord of Hosts to thy great Ancestor,
To Nabonassar, gave the all-ruling sceptre
O'er all the nations, kingdoms, languages;
Lord paramount of life and death, he slew
Where'er he will'd; and where he will'd men lived;
His word exalted, and his word debased;
And so his heart swell'd up; and, in its pride,
Arose to Heaven! But then the Lord of earth
Became an outcast from the sons of men—
Companion of the browsing beasts! the dews
Of night fell cold upon his crownless brow,
And the wild asses of the desert fed
Round their unenvied peer! And so he knew

That God is Sovereign o'er earth's sceptred Lords.
But thou, his son, unwarn'd, untaught, untamed,
Belshazzar, hast arisen against the Lord,
And in the vessels of his house hast quaff'd
Profane libations, 'mid thy slaves and women,
To gods of gold, and stone, and wood; and laugh'd
The King of Kings, the God of Gods, to scorn.
Now hear the words, and hear their secret meaning—
"Number'd!" twice "Number'd! Weighed! Divided!"
King,
Thy reign is number'd, and thyself art weigh'd,
And wanting in the balance, and thy realm
Sever'd, and to the conquering Persian given!

ARIOCH.

What vengeance will he wreak? The pit of lions—
The stake——

BELSHAZZAR.

Go—lead the Hebrew forth, array'd
In the proud robe, let all the city hail
The honour'd of Belshazzar. Oh! not long
Will that imperial name command your awe!

BELSHAZZAR, NITOCRIS.

BELSHAZZAR.

And ye, my bright and festal halls, whose vaults
Were full of sweet sounds as the summer groves,
Must ye be changed for chambers, where no tone
Of music sounds, nor melody of harp,

Or lute, or woman's melting voice?—My mother!—
And how shall we two meet the coming ruin?
In arms! thou say'st; but with what arms, to front
The Invisible, that in the silent air
Wars on us? Shall we seek some place of silence,
Where the cold cypress shades our Fathers' tombs,
And grow familiar with the abode of Death?
And yet how calm, how fragrant, how serene
The night!—When empires fall, and Fate thrusts down
The monarchs from their ancient thrones, 'tis said,
The red stars meet, with ominous, hostile fires;
And the dark vault of Heaven flames all across
With meteors; and the conscious earth is rock'd;
And foaming rivers burst their shores! But now,
Save in my soul, there is no prescient dread:—
Nought but my fear-struck brow is dark and sad.
All sleeps in moonlight silence: ye can wave,
Oh happy gardens! in the cool night airs
Your playful branches; ye can rise to Heaven,
And glitter, my unconscious palace-towers;
No gliding hand, no Prophet's voice to you
Hath rent the veil that hides the awful future!
Well, we'll go rest once more on kingly couches,
My mother, and we'll wake and feel that earth
Still trembles at our nod, and see the slaves
Reading their fate in our imperial looks!
And then—and then——Ye Gods! that I had still
Nought but my shuddering and distracting fears;
That those dread letters might resume once more

Their dark and unintelligible brightness;
Or that 'twere o'er, and I and Babylon
Were—what a few short days or hours will make us!

Above the City.

THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

The hour is come! the hour is come! With voice
Heard in thy inmost soul, I summon thee,
Cyrus, the Lord's anointed! And thou River,
That flow'st exulting in thy proud approach
To Babylon, beneath whose shadowy walls
And brazen gates, and gilded palaces,
And groves, that gleam with marble obelisks,
Thy azure bosom shall repose, with lights
Fretted and chequer'd like the starry heavens:
I do arrest thee in thy stately course,
By Him that pour'd thee from thine ancient fountain,
And sent thee forth, even at the birth of Time,
One of his holy streams, to lave the mounts
Of paradise. Thou hear'st me: thou dost check
Abrupt thy waters, as the Arab chief
His headlong squadrons. Where the unobserved
Yet toiling Persian breaks the ruining mound,
I see thee gather thy tumultuous strength;
And, through the deep and roaring Naharmalcha*,
Roll on, as proudly conscious of fulfilling
The Omnipotent command! While, far away,

* The royal canal which connected the waters of the Euphrates with the artificial lake.

The lake, that slept but now so calm, nor moved
Save by the rippling moonshine, heaves on high
Its foaming surface, like a whirlpool gulf,
And boils and whitens with the unwonted tide.
  But silent as thy billows used to flow,
And terrible the hosts of Elam move,
Winding their darksome way profound, where man
Ne'er trod, nor light e'er shone, nor air from Heav'n
Breathed. Oh! ye secret and unfathom'd depths,
How are ye now a smooth and royal way
For th' army of God's vengeance! Fellow slaves,
And ministers of the Eternal purpose,
Not guided by the treacherous injured sons
Of Babylon, but by my mightier arm,
Ye come, and spread your banners, and display
Your glittering arms as ye advance, all white
Beneath th' admiring moon. Come on! the gates
Are open—not for banqueters in blood
Like you!—I see on either side o'erflow
The living deluge of arm'd men, and cry
Begin, begin, with fire and sword begin
The work of wrath. Upon my shadowy wings
I pause and float a little while to see
Mine human instruments fulfil my task
Of final ruin. Then I mount, I fly,
And sing my proud song, as I ride the clouds,
That stars may hear, and all the hosts of worlds,
That live along the interminable space,
Take up Jehovah's everlasting triumph!

The Streets of Babylon.

ADONIJAH, IMLAH.

ADONIJAH.

Imlah! this way he motion'd me to pass.

IMLAH.

My son! (alas! I ever call thee son,
Though my old childless heart but bleeds the more
At that fond name), the broad Euphrates lies
That way, nor boat nor bark is wont to moor
By that inhospitable pier; he meant
Toward the Temple—that way leads not thither.

ADONIJAH.

Father, the Lord will make a way, where'er
His prophets do direct our feet. Thou saw'st not
As I; they led him at the king's command
Along the streets, in scarlet clad, and made
Their trumpets clamour, and their voices shout
Before great Daniel; but it seem'd he mark'd
Nor trumpet sound, nor voice of man: the garb,
Th' array, the triumph touch'd not him: he held
A strange, elate, and voiceless intercourse
With some dark being in the clouds; for now
I saw him, as the torches shone upon him—
His brow like some crown'd warrior's, when his hosts
Are spreading, in their arm'd magnificence,
Over a conquer'd realm; and now he seem'd

To count impatient the slow time; and now
He look'd, where in the distant darkness rose
The Temple, now where still the palace shone
With its rich festal light, as though he watch'd
And listen'd for some earthquake to o'erthrow them.
His ominous looks were terrible with ruin;
The majesty of God's triumphant vengeance
Was in his tread: even thus the Patriarch look'd,
When, mounting in his ark, he saw the deluge
Come sweeping o'er the doom'd yet heedless world.
Something, be sure, the hand of God prepares
To rescue, to revenge.

IMLAH.

Too late! too late!
Oh if last night!

ADONIJAH.

My father!

IMLAH.

Thou art right;
'Twas rashly, madly spoken—but my spirit
Is wrung almost to find a deadly pleasure
In madly uttering what the heart abhors.
I'll on with thee.

ADONIJAH.

He motion'd me alone.

IMLAH.

He did—and he must be obey'd; farewell,
Dear youth—dear son! if thou should'st meet with her

Cast forth in scorn, and groveling on the earth,
Chide her not, Adonijah—speak not to her,
Lest thy compassion seem to mock her shame:
But, pray thee, lead her to the old man's home—
To the old man's heart, that will not love her less,
Though his love have less of pride and more of sorrow.
Farewell, and prosper!
I'll go wander on
Through the dusk streets. Poor Naomi! I left thee,
Thy wretchedness had wrought its own relief,
Asleep. Oh thou, if thou should'st never wake,
Thrice bless'd. Beloved, I should mourn for thee,
But envy while I mourn'd.
Great King of vengeance,
God of my fathers! thou art here at length.
Behold! behold! from every street the flames
Burst out, and armed men, proud conquering men,
Move, in the blaze they've kindled, to destroy.
Are ye the avenging Spirits of the Lord
Descended on the blast, and clouding o'er
The Heavens, as ye come down, with that red cope
Deeper than lightning? No—it is the Mede,
The ravaging, the slaughtering, merciless Mede.
This way they fly, with shrieks, and clashing arms,
And multitudes that choke th' impassable streets,
Till the fierce conqueror hew his ruthless way.
Shall not I fly? and wherefore? Oh! waste on,
And burn, triumphant stranger! trample down

Master and slave alike!——there is one house
Thou canst not make more desolate: thou canst not
Pour ills on any of these guilty roofs,
So hateful as have burst on mine.——Who comes?

NITOCRIS, IMLAH.

NITOCRIS.

My son! my son! I heard the cries—I saw
The flames; I rush'd through all the shrieking palace
To seek him—and I found him not; and sprang
To find him, where, I thought not, where, I knew not.
One moment do I plunge within the gloom
Of some dark court, to shun the foe—the next,
I bless the angry and destroying light,
Because I think it may disclose the face,
The beauteous face of mine Imperial Boy.
I've pass'd by widows, and by frantic mothers,
That howl and tear their hair o'er their dead children:
I cannot find my child, even to perform
That last sad duty of my love—to mourn him.
I've cried aloud, and told them I'm their queen;
They gaze on me, and mock me with their pity,
Showing that queens can be as desolate
As slaves: and sometimes have I paused and stoop'd
O'er dying faces, with a hideous hope
Of seeing my son! I dare not cry Belshazzar,
Lest he should hear me, and come forth and meet

The slaughtering sword. Ye Gods! his very beauty
And majesty will mark him out for slaughter:
And the fierce Persian, that in weary pride
May scorn to flesh his sword on meaner heads,
Will win himself an everlasting glory,
By slaying th' unarm'd, the succourless Belshazzar.
Here's one—hast seen him? Slave, I 'll give thee gold,
I'll give thee kingdoms——ah! what gold and kingdoms
Hath the sad queen of captive Babylon
To give? but thou hast haply known the love
That parents bear to those who have been a part
Of their own selves; whose lives are twined with theirs
So subtly, that 'twere worse than death to part them.
Hast seen the king—my son—the pride of kings—
My peerless son?

IMLAH.

I had a child this morn,
Beautiful as the doe upon the mountains,
Pure as the crystal of the brook she drinks;
And when they rent her from her father's heart,
To death——oh no!—to deeper woe than death,
The queen of Babylon swept proudly by,
Nor stoop'd to waste her pity on the childless.

NITOCRIS.

O ye just Gods! but cruel in your justice!
And never met ye more?

IMLAH.

No more!

NITOCRIS.

Great Heaven!
I own your equal hand: the bitter chalice
That we have given to others' lips, our own
Must to the dregs drink out. So, never more
Shall I behold thee—not to wind thy corpse—
To pour sweet ointments on thy clay-cold limbs.
Alas! and what did Nabonassar's daughter
In the dark streets alone? when there were men
To rally, arms to array—my voice, my look,
The hereditary terror that is said
To dwell on mine imperial brow, had pour'd
Dismay and flight upon the conquering Mede,
Semiramis, for empire, cast away
The woman, and went forth in brazen arms.
I could not for my son!
My naked feet
Bleed where I move; and on my crownless head
(For what have I to do with crowns?) beat cold
The chilling elements; till but now I felt not
My loose, and thin, and insufficient raiment.
Well, there 's enough to shroud the dead; and thee
To colder nakedness, my son! my son!
The spoiler will have stripp'd.——

IMLAH.

God pardon me
For taunting her distress! Rest here, oh queen!
Under this low and wretched roof thou art safe;

The plunderer wars upon the gilded palace,
Not the base hovel. There 's a mother there
As sad as thou, and sleep may be as merciful
To thee as her.

NITOCRIS.

Sleep! sleep! with Babylon
In flames around me; Nabonassar's realm,
The city of earth's sovereigns rushing down,
The pride of countless ages, and the glory,
By generations of triumphant kings
Rear'd up—my sire's, my husband's, and my son's,
And mine own stately birth-place perishing:
The summer gardens of my joy cut down;
The ivory chambers of my luxury,
Where I was wed, and bore my beauteous son,
Howl'd through by strangers! No—I 'll on, and find
Death or my son, or both! My glorious city!
My old ancestral throne! thou 'lt still afford
A burial fire. I 've lived a queen, the daughter
Of kings, the wife, the mother—and will die
Queen-like, with Babylon my funeral pile!

Before the Temple.

BENINA.

Oh thou dread night! what new and awful signs
Crowd thy portentous hours, so calm in heav'n,
With all thy stars and full-orb'd moon serene

Sleeping on crystal and pellucid clouds !
How terrible on earth ! as I rush'd down
The vacant stair, nor heard a living sound,
Save mine own bounding footstep, all at once
Methought Euphrates' rolling waters sank
Into the earth ; the gilded galleys rock'd,
And plunged and settled in the sandy depths ;
And the tall bridge upon its lengthening pier
Seem'd to bestride a dark, unfathom'd gulf.
There, where blue waters and the ivory decks
Of royal vessels, and their silver prows,
Reflected the bright lights of heav'n, they shone
Upon the glancing armour, helms, and spears
Of a vast army : then the stone-paved walls
Rang with the weight of chariots, and the gates
Of brass fell down with ponderous clang : then sank
O'er the vast city one sepulchral silence,
As though the wondering conqueror scarce believed
His easy triumph. But ye revellers
That lay at rest upon your festal garments,
The pleasant weariness of wine and joy,
And the sweet dreams of your scarce-ended pleasures,
Still hanging o'er your silken couches ! ye
Woke only, if ye woke indeed, to see
The Median scimitar that, red with blood,
Flash'd o'er you, or the blaze of fire that wrapt
In sulphurous folds the chambers of your rest.
Oh Lord of Hosts ! in thine avenging hour

How dreadful art thou! Pardon if I weep
When all my grateful heart should beat with joy
For my deliverance.

KALASSAN, BENINA.

KALASSAN.

All is lost! Great Bel,
Thus, thus dost thou avenge thy broken rite!
Now, by thy thunders, 'tis the beauteous bride—
Thou givest her to me yet.

BENINA.

Miscreant! what mean'st thou?

KALASSAN.

'Twas love before; and now 'tis love and vengeance;
And I will quaff the doubly-mantling cup,
In all its richness.

BENINA.

Guilty man! look around,
Thou see'st my God, the God of Gods, reveal'd
In yon wide fires! Nor thou, nor one of those
That walk the death-doom'd streets of Babylon,
Hath even an hour to live.

KALASSAN.

Then I've no hour
To waste. 'Tis said the Indian widows mount
In pride and joy their husbands' funeral pyres;
Thou, in thy deep devotion, shalt excel them,

And wed thy bridegroom for the loftier glory
Of dying by his side.

BENINA.

Oh mercy!

KALASSAN.

Mercy!
Ask of the Babylonian maids and wives
If they find mercy?

BENINA.

Ah! and I presumed
To speak of pitying others!

KALASSAN.

Come——What 's here?

KALASSAN, BENINA, ADONIJAH.

ADONIJAH.

With unwet foot I trod the river depths:
It is the privilege of Israel's sons
To walk through seas as on dry land.

BENINA.

Oh stranger!
That bear'st a Persian scimitar——No stranger!
Is it his angel, with his beauteous brow—
His eyes, his voice—his clasping arms around me?—
Mine own, my brave, my noble Adonijah!
Too bounteous Heaven!

KALASSAN.

Fond slave! unclasp thine arms.

ADONIJAH.

What—must I rob the Persian of his victim?
Oh! not in vain this bright and welcome steel
Glitter'd to court my grasp! What! the first foe
My warrior arm hath met, retreat before me?
I'll follow thee to earth's remotest verge.

BENINA.

Oh! I could shriek, and weary Heaven with cries
For my sad self—for thee—for thee! My lips
Are parch'd to silence; and my throat——Come back!
Their swords clash—some one falls—and groans:—he calls not
Upon the God of Israel.—Ha! perchance
He cannot cry! All 's dark.—Ah me! how strong,
How dreadful was the Heathen in his strength!
He 's here!—I dare not ask, which art thou? which—
Alas, prophetic spirit, hast thou left me
To ask? 'Mong thousands, Love! thou us'dst to know
His tread—

ADONIJAH.

Where art thou, Sweet?

BENINA.

Here—on thy bosom.

ADONIJAH.

The Lord hath triumph'd by his servant's hands:
He lies in death, blaspheming his own Gods.

BENINA.

Merciful! I almost thank thee for the dread

And danger of this night, that closes thus
In such o'erpowering joy!

ADONIJAH.

Hast suffer'd nought
But dread and danger?

BENINA.

What?

ADONIJAH.

Thou'st been where evil
Riots uncheck'd, untamed!

BENINA.

Oh Adonijah!
I have endured thy lip upon my cheek,
And I endure thine arms clasp'd fondly round me.
And on thy bosom I recline, and look
Upon thy face with eyes suffused with tears,
But not of shame. What would'st thou more?

ADONIJAH.

Nought, nought.
Oh pardon that my jealous fears misdoubted
Thy pure, thy proud, thy holy love! Come on!
Come to thy parents' home that wait for thee,
And change the voiceless house of desolation
To an abode of joy, as mute.
Come! come!
Beauteous as her that with her timbrel pass'd
Along the Red Sea depths, and cast her song
Upon the free airs of the wilderness—
The song of joy, of triumph, of deliverance!

The Streets of Babylon in Flames.

BELSHAZZAR.

I cannot fight nor fly: where'er I move,
On shadowy battlement, or cloud of smoke,
That dark unbodied hand waves to and fro,
And marshals me the way to death—to death
That still eludes me. Every blazing wall
Breaks out in those red characters of fate;
And when I raised my sword to war, methought
That dark-stoled Prophet stood between, and seemed
Rebuking Heaven for its slow consummation
Of his dire words.
I am alone: my slaves
Fled at the first wild outcry; and my women
Closed all their doors against me—for they knew me
Mark'd with the seal of destiny: no hand,
Though I have sued for water, holds a cup
To my parch'd lips; no voice, as I pass on,
Hath bless'd me; from the very festal garments,
That glitter'd in my halls, they shake the dust:
Ev'n the priests spurn'd me, as abhorr'd of Heaven.
Oh! but the fiery Mede doth well avenge me!
They're strew'd beneath my feet—though not in worship!
Oh death! death! death! that art so swift to seize
The conqueror on his triumph day, the bride
Ere yet the wedding lamps have waned, the king
While all mankind are kneeling at his footstool—
Thou 'rt only slow to him that knows himself

Thy fated prey, that seeks within the tomb
A dark retreat from wretchedness and shame.
From shame!—the heir of Nabonassar's glory!
From wretchedness!—the Lord of Babylon—
Of golden and luxurious Babylon!
Alas! through burning Babylon! the fallen,
The city of lamentation and of slaughter!
A fugitive and outcast, that can find,
Of all his realm, not even a grave!—so base,
That even the conquering Mede disdains to slay him!

Before the House of Imlah.

IMLAH, ADONIJAH, BENINA, NAOMI.

IMLAH.

Naomi! Naomi! look forth—she's here!

NAOMI.

I know she is—in dreams: through all the night
I've seen her, gliding from the fountain side
With the pure urn of water, or with lips
Apart, and bashful voice, that faintly breath'd
One of her country's songs! I've seen her kneeling
In prayer, alas! that ne'er was heard on high!
And thou hast scared my vision's joys away—
To see—all heav'n on fire, and the vast city——
Imlah! what mean those massy clouds of smoke,
Those shrieks and clashings?——and—that youth and
maid,

Why stand they there? we need no sad remembrancers
Of our deep desolation!

BENINA.

Doth my mother
With such sad salutation welcome home
Her child?

NAOMI.

No! no! ye can no more delude me!
Twice have I woken, and heard that voice, and stretch'd
My arms——

BENINA.

But hast not folded to thy bosom,
As thus, thy child, thy lost, thy loved Benina!

NAOMI.

'Tis living flesh! it is a breathing lip!
And the heart swells like——Oh no!—not like mine!
Oh! thou twice born! the sorrow and the joy,
Which I endured to bring my beauteous babe
Into the world, were nought to this!

BENINA.

Dear mother,
May I ne'er cost thee bitterer tears than these!

IMLAH.

My father's God, thou show'dst thyself of old,
By smiting water from the stony rock,
And raining manna on the desert sands!
Here is thy best—most gracious miracle!
Making the childless heart to laugh with gladness;

The eyes, that had forgot to weep, o'erflow
With tears delicious! Thou hast rais'd the dead,
And to the widow given her breathless child*!
But what was that pale boy to her that stands
So beautiful before us? What was death
To her dark trial? And she's here—and life
Bounds in her bosom—the young doves that erst,
Ere yet the cold airs soil'd their snowy plumes,
Were offer'd in thy Temple, not so pure!

NAOMI.

How cam'st thou hither?

BENINA.

Ask of him that led me—
Of him—whom all but I seem to have forgotten.

ADONIJAH.

Love, I shall take a sweet revenge hereafter,
Resuming to myself the boon that now
They have no time to thank me for.—What's he,
That rushes where proud War disdains to spoil?
That tread was wont to move in marble halls,
To sounds of music. Round his limbs, that shake
And quiver, as with pain, he wraps his robes,
Like one men wont to gaze on. Even despair
On such a brow looks noble!—Hark! he speaks——

* See 1 Kings xvii. 17, 21. I make this reference because a poetical critic, very profound in biblical history, supposed that, by a trifling anachronism, I alluded to our Saviour and the Widow of Nain. I have altered one word, to preclude similar misapprehension.

THE ABOVE, BELSHAZZAR.

BELSHAZZAR.

'Tis come at last! the barbed arrow drinks
My life-blood. 'Mid the base abode of slaves
I seem to stand: not here—my fathers set
Like suns in glory! I 'll not perish here,
And stifle like some vile, forgotten lamp!
Oh, dreadful God! is 't not enough?—My state
I equall'd with the Heavens—and wilt thou trample me
Beneath these——What are ye that crowd around me?
I have a dim remembrance of your forms
And voices. Are ye not the slaves that stood
This morn before me? and——

IMLAH.

Thou spurn'dst us from thee.

BELSHAZZAR.

And ye 'll revenge you on the clay-cold corpse.

IMLAH.

Fear not: our God, and this world's cruel usage,
Have taught us early, what kings learn too late.

BELSHAZZAR.

Ye know me, then—ye know the King of Babylon—
The king of dust and ashes? for what else
Is now the beauteous city—earth's delight?
And what the King himself but—dust and ashes?

BENINA.

He faints—support him, dearest Adonijah!

BELSHAZZAR.

Mine eyes are heavy, and a swoon, a sleep,
Swims o'er my head :—go, summon me the lutes,
That used to soothe me to my balmiest slumbers;
And bid the snowy-handed maidens fan
The dull, hot air around me. 'Tis not well—
This bed—'tis hard and damp. I gave command
I would not lie but on the softest plumes
That the birds bear. Slaves! hear ye not?—'tis cold—
'Tis piercing cold!

BENINA.

Alas! he's little used
To feel the night winds on his naked brow:
He's breathing still—spread o'er him that bright mantle;
A strange, sad use for robes of sovereignty.

THE ABOVE, NITOCRIS.

NITOCRIS.

Why should I pass street after street, through flames
That make the hardy conqueror shrink; and stride
O'er heaps of dying, that look up and wonder
To see a living and unwounded being?
Oh! mercifully cruel, they do slay
The child and mother with one blow! the bride
And bridegroom! I alone am spared, to die
Remote from all—from him with whose cold ashes
To mingle mine, a desperate hope I've cherish'd.
'Tis all the daughter of great Nabonassar

Hath now to ask!—I'll sit me down and listen,
And through that turbulent din of clattering steel,
And cries of murder'd men, and smouldering houses,
And th' answering trumpets of the Mede and Persian,
Summoning their bands to some new work of slaughter,
Anon one universal cry of triumph
Will burst; and all the city, either host,
In mute and breathless admiration, lie
To hear the o'erpowering clamour that announces
Belshazzar slain!—and then I'll rise and rush
To that dread place—they'll let me weep or die
Upon his corpse!—Old man, thou'st found thy child.

IMLAH.

I have—I have—and thine! Oh! rise not thus,
In thy majestic joy, as though to mount
Earth's throne again. Behold the King!

NITOCRIS.

My son!
On the cold earth—not there, but on my bosom—
Alas! that's colder still. My beauteous boy,
Look up and see——

BELSHAZZAR.

I can see nought—all's darkness!

NITOCRIS.

Too true: he'll die, and will not know me! Son!
Thy mother speaks—thy only kindred flesh,
That lov'd thee ere thou wert; and, when thou'rt gone,
Will love thee still the more!

BELSHAZZAR.

Have dying kings
Lovers or kindred? Hence! disturb me not.

NITOCRIS.

Shall I disturb thee, crouching by thy side
To die with thee? Oh! how he used to turn
And nestle his young cheek in this full bosom,
That now he shrinks from! No! it is the last
Convulsive shudder of cold death. My son,
Wait—wait, and I will die with thee—not yet—
Alas! yet this was what I pray'd for—this—
To kiss thy cold cheek, and inhale thy last—
Thy dying breath.

IMLAH.

Behold! behold, they rise;
Feebly they stand, by their united strength
Supported. Hath yon kindling of the darkness,
Yon blaze, that seems as if the earth and heaven
Were mingled in one ghastly funeral pile,
Arous'd them? Lo, the flames, like a gorg'd serpent,
That slept in glittering but scarce-moving folds,
Now, having sprung a nobler prey, break out
In tenfold rage.

ADONIJAH.

How like a lioness,
Robb'd of her kingly brood, she glares! She wipes
From her wan brow the grey discolour'd locks,
Where used to gleam Assyria's diadem;
And now and then her tenderest glance recurs

To him that closer to her bleeding heart
She clasps, as self-reproachful that aught earthly
Distracts her from her one maternal care.

IMLAH.

More pale, and more intent, he looks abroad
Into the ruin, as though he felt a pride
Even in the splendor of the desolation!

BELSHAZZAR.

The hand—the unbodied hand—it moves—look there!
Look where it points!—my beautiful palace——

NITOCRIS.

Look—
The Temple of great Bel——

BELSHAZZAR.

Our halls of joy!

NITOCRIS.

Earth's pride and wonder!

IMLAH.

Ay, o'er both the fire
Mounts like a conqueror: here, o'er spacious courts,
And avenues of pillars, and long roofs,
From which red streams of molten gold pour down,
It spreads, till all, like those vast fabrics, seem
Built of the rich clouds round the setting sun—
All the wide heavens, one bright and shadowy palace!
But terrible here—th' Almighty's wrathful hand
Everywhere manifest!—There the Temple stands,
Tower above tower, one pyramid of flame;
To which those kingly sepulchres by Nile

Were but as hillocks to vast Caucasus!
Aloof, the wreck of Nimrod's impious tower
Alone is dark; and something like a cloud,
But gloomier, hovers o'er it. All is mute:
Man's cries, and clashing steel, and braying trumpet—
The only sound the rushing noise of fire!
Now, hark! the universal crash—at once
They fall—they sink——

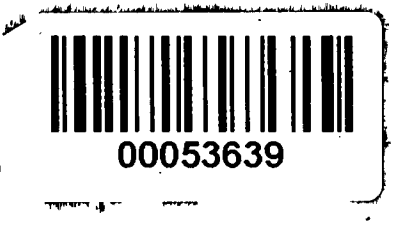
ADONIJAH.

And so do those that rul'd them!
The Palace, and the Temple, and the race
Of Nabonassar, are at once extinct!
Babylon and her kings are fallen for ever!

IMLAH.

Without a cry, without a groan, behold them,
Th' Imperial mother and earth-ruling son
Stretch'd out in death! Nor she without a gleam
Of joy expiring with her cheek on his:
Nor he unconscious that with him the pride
And terror of the world is fallen—th' abode
And throne of universal empire—now
A plain of ashes round the tombless dead!—
Oh, God of hosts! Almighty, Everlasting!
God of our Fathers, thou alone art great!

END OF VOL. I.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